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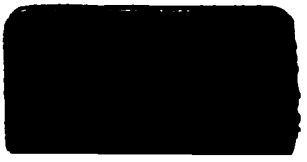

RUDYARD KIPLING

VOLUME XIII

THE DAY'S WORK

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THE DAY'S WORK

PART I

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THE DAY'S WORK

PART I

THE BRIDGE-BUILDERS

THE BRIDGE-BUILDERS

THE least that Findlayson, of the Public Works Department, expected was a C. I. E.; he dreamed of a C. S. I.: indeed, his friends told him that he deserved more. For three years he had endured heat and cold, disappointment, discomfort, danger, and disease, with responsibility almost too heavy for one pair of shoulders; and day by day, through that time, the great Kashi Bridge over the Ganges had grown under his charge. Now, in less than three months, if all went well, his Excellency the Viceroy would open the bridge in state, an archbishop would bless it, and the first trainload of soldiers would come over it, and there would be speeches.

Findlayson, C. E., sat in his trolley on a construction line that ran along one of the main revetments — the huge stone-faced banks that flared away north and south for three miles on either side of the river — and permitted himself to think of the end. With its approaches, his work was one mile and three-quarters in length; a lattice-girder bridge, trussed with the Findlayson

truss, standing on seven-and-twenty brick piers. Each one of those piers was twenty-four feet in diameter, capped with red Agra stone and sunk eighty feet below the shifting sand of the Ganges' bed. Above them was a railway-line fifteen feet broad; above that, again, a cart-road of eighteen feet, flanked with footpaths. At either end rose towers, of red brick, loopholed for musketry and pierced for big guns, and the ramp of the road was being pushed forward to their haunches. The raw earth-ends were crawling and alive with hundreds upon hundreds of tiny asses climbing out of the yawning borrow-pit below with sackfuls of stuff; and the hot afternoon air was filled with the noise of hooves, the rattle of the drivers' sticks, and the swish and roll-down of the dirt. The river was very low, and on the dazzling white sand between the three centre piers stood squat cribs of railway-sleepers, filled within and daubed without with mud, to support the last of the girders as those were riveted up. In the little deep water left by the drought, an overhead crane travelled to and fro along its spile-pier, jerking sections of iron into place, snorting and backing and grunting as an elephant grunts in the timber-yard. Riveters by the hundred swarmed about the lattice side-work and the iron roof of the railway-line, hung from invisible staging under the bellies of the girders, clustered round the

throats of the piers, and rode on the overhang of the footpath-stanchions; their fire-pots and the spurts of flame that answered each hammer-stroke showing no more than pale yellow in the sun's glare. East and west and north and south the construction-trains rattled and shrieked up and down the embankments, the piled trucks of brown and white stone banging behind them till the side-boards were unpinned, and with a roar and a grumble a few thousand tons' more material were flung out to hold the river in place.

Findlayson, C. E., turned on his trolley and looked over the face of the country that he had changed for seven miles around. Looked back on the humming village of five thousand workmen; up stream and down, along the vista of spurs and sand; across the river to the far piers, lessening in the haze; overhead to the guard-towers — and only he knew how strong those were — and with a sigh of contentment saw that his work was good. There stood his bridge before him in the sunlight, lacking only a few weeks' work on the girders of the three middle piers — his bridge, raw and ugly as original sin, but *pukka* — permanent — to endure when all memory of the builder, yea, even of the splendid Findlayson truss, had perished. Practically, the thing was done.

Hitchcock, his assistant, cantered along the line on a little switch-tailed Kabuli pony who through

long practice could have trotted securely over a trestle, and nodded to his chief.

"All but," said he, with a smile.

"I've been thinking about it," the senior answered. "'Not half a bad job for two men, is it?"

"One — and a half. 'Gad, what a Cooper's Hill cub I was when I came on the works!" Hitchcock felt very old in the crowded experiences of the past three years, that had taught him power and responsibility.

"You *were* rather a colt," said Findlayson. "I wonder how you'll like going back to office-work when this job's over."

"I shall hate it!" said the young man, and as he went on his eye followed Findlayson's, and he muttered, "Isn't it damned good?"

"I think we'll go up the service together," Findlayson said to himself. "You're too good a youngster to waste on another man. Cub thou wast; assistant thou art. Personal assistant, and at Simla, thou shalt be, if any credit comes to me out of the business!"

Indeed, the burden of the work had fallen altogether on Findlayson and his assistant, the young man whom he had chosen because of his rawness to break to his own needs. There were labour contractors by the half-hundred — fitters and riveters, European, borrowed from the railway workshops, with, perhaps, twenty white and half-caste

subordinates to direct, under direction, the bevies of workmen — but none knew better than these two, who trusted each other, how the underlings were not to be trusted. They had been tried many times in sudden crises — by slipping of booms, by breaking of tackle, failure of cranes, and the wrath of the river — but no stress had brought to light any man among men whom Findlayson and Hitchcock would have honoured by working as remorselessly as they worked themselves. Findlayson thought it over from the beginning: the months of office-work destroyed at a blow when the Government of India, at the last moment, added two feet to the width of the bridge, under the impression that bridges were cut out of paper, and so brought to ruin at least half an acre of calculations — and Hitchcock, new to disappointment, buried his head in his arms and wept; the heart-breaking delays over the filling of the contracts in England; the futile correspondences hinting at great wealth of commissions if one, only one, rather doubtful consignment were passed; the war that followed the refusal; the careful, polite obstruction at the other end that followed the war, till young Hitchcock, putting one month's leave to another month, and borrowing ten days from Findlayson, spent his poor little savings of a year in a wild dash to London, and there, as his own tongue asserted and the later con-

signments proved, put the fear of God into a man so great that he feared only Parliament and said so till Hitchcock wrought with him across his own dinner-table, and — he feared the Kashi Bridge and all who spoke in its name. Then there was the cholera that came in the night to the village by the bridge works; and after the cholera smote the small-pox. The fever they had always with them. Hitchcock had been appointed a magistrate of the third class with whipping powers, for the better government of the community, and Findlayson watched him wield his powers temperately, learning what to overlook and what to look after. It was a long, long reverie, and it covered storm, sudden freshets, death in every manner and shape, violent and awful rage against red tape half frenzying a mind that knows it should be busy on other things; drought, sanitation, finance; birth, wedding, burial, and riot in the village of twenty warring castes; argument, expostulation, persuasion, and the blank despair that a man goes to bed upon, thankful that his rifle is all in pieces in the gun-case. Behind everything rose the black frame of the Kashi Bridge — plate by plate, girder by girder, span by span — and each pier of it recalled Hitchcock, the all-round man, who had stood by his chief without failing from the very first to this last.

So the bridge was two men's work — unless

one counted Peroo, as Peroo certainly counted himself. He was a Lascar, a Kharva from Bulsar, familiar with every port between Rockhampton and London, who had risen to the rank of serang on the British India boats, but wearying of routine musters and clean clothes, had thrown up the service and gone inland, where men of his calibre were sure of employment. For his knowledge of tackle and the handling of heavy weights, Peroo was worth almost any price he might have chosen to put upon his services; but custom decreed the wage of the overhead-men, and Peroo was not within many silver pieces of his proper value. Neither running water nor extreme heights made him afraid; and, as an ex-serang, he knew how to hold authority. No piece of iron was so big or so badly placed that Peroo could not devise a tackle to lift it — a loose-ended, sagging arrangement, rigged with a scandalous amount of talking, but perfectly equal to the work in hand. It was Peroo who had saved the girder of Number Seven pier from destruction when the new wire-rope jammed in the eye of the crane, and the huge plate tilted in its slings, threatening to slide out sideways. Then the native workmen lost their heads with great shoutings, and Hitchcock's right arm was broken by a falling T-plate, and he buttoned it up in his coat and swooned, and came to and directed for four hours till Peroo, from the

top of the crane, reported "All's well," and the plate swung home. There was no one like Peroo, serang, to lash, and guy, and hold, to control the donkey-engines, to hoist a fallen locomotive craftily out of the borrow-pit into which it had tumbled; to strip, and dive, if need be, to see how the concrete blocks round the piers stood the scouring of Mother Gunga, or to adventure upstream on a monsoon night and report on the state of the embankment-facings. He would interrupt the field-councils of Findlayson and Hitchcock without fear, till his wonderful English, or his still more wonderful *lingua-franca*, half Portuguese and half Malay, ran out and he was forced to take string and show the knots that he would recommend. He controlled his own gang of tacklemen — mysterious relatives from Kutch Mandvi gathered month by month and tried to the uttermost. No consideration of family or kin allowed Peroo to keep weak hands or a giddy head on the pay-roll. "My honour is the honour of this bridge," he would say to the about-to-be-dismissed. "What do I care for your honour? Go and work on a steamer. That is all you are fit for."

The little cluster of huts where he and his gang lived centred round the tattered dwelling of a sea-priest — one who had never set foot on black water, but had been chosen as ghostly counsellor by

two generations of sea-rovers all unaffected by port missions or those creeds which are thrust upon sailors by agencies along Thames bank. The priest of the Lascars had nothing to do with their caste, or indeed with anything at all. He ate the offerings of his church, and slept and smoked, and slept again, "for," said Peroo, who had haled him a thousand miles inland, "he is a very holy man. He never cares what you eat so long as you do not eat beef, and that is good, because on land we worship Shiva, we Kharvas; but at sea on the Kumpani's boats we attend strictly to the orders of the Burra Malum [the first mate], and on this bridge we observe what Finlinson Sahib says."

Finlinson Sahib had that day given orders to clear the scaffolding from the guard-tower on the right bank, and Peroo with his mates was casting loose and lowering down the bamboo poles and planks as swiftly as ever they had whipped the cargo out of a coaster.

From his trolley he could hear the whistle of the serang's silver pipe and the creek and clatter of the pulleys. Peroo was standing on the topmost coping of the tower, clad in the blue dungaree of his abandoned service, and as Findlayson motioned to him to be careful, for his was no life to throw away, he gripped the last pole, and, shading his eyes ship-fashion, answered with the long-drawn wail of the fo'c'sle lookout: "*Ham*

dekhta hai" ("I am looking out"). Findlayson laughed and then sighed. It was years since he had seen a steamer, and he was sick for home. As his trolley passed under the tower, Peroo descended by a rope, ape-fashion, and cried: "It looks well now, Sahib. Our bridge is all but done. What think you Mother Gunga will say when the rail runs over?"

"She has said little so far. It was never Mother Gunga that delayed us."

"There is always time for her; and none the less there has been delay. Has the Sahib forgotten last autumn's flood, when the stone-boats were sunk without warning — or only a half-day's warning?"

"Yes, but nothing save a big flood could hurt us now. The spurs are holding well on the west bank."

"Mother Gunga eats great allowances. There is always room for more stone on the revetments. I tell this to the Chota Sahib" — he meant Hitchcock — "and he laughs."

"No matter, Peroo. Another year thou wilt be able to build a bridge in thine own fashion."

The Lascar grinned. "Then it will not be in this way — with stonework sunk under water, as the *Lyetta* was sunk. I like sus-sus-pen-sheen bridges that fly from bank to bank, with one big step, like a gang-plank. Then no water can

hurt. When does the Lord Sahib come to open the bridge?"

"In three months, when the weather is cooler."

"Ho! ho! He is like the Burra Malum. He sleeps below while the work is being done. Then he comes upon the quarter-deck and touches with his finger, and says: 'This is not clean! Dam jibboonwallah!'"

"But the Lord Sahib does not call me a dam jibboonwallah, Peroo."

"No, Sahib; but he does not come on deck till the work is all finished. Even the Burra Malum of the *Nerbudda* said once at Tuticorin —"

"Bah! Go! I am busy."

"I, also!" said Peroo, with an unshaken countenance. "May I take the light dinghy now and row along the spurs?"

"To hold them with thy hands? They are, I think, sufficiently heavy."

"Nay, Sahib. It is thus. At sea, on the Black Water, we have room to be blown up and down without care. Here we have no room at all. Look you, we have put the river into a dock, and run her between stone sills."

Findlayson smiled at the "we."

"We have bitted and bridled her. She is not like the sea, that can beat against a soft beach. She is Mother Gunga — in irons." His voice fell a little.

"Peroo, thou hast been up and down the world more even than I. Speak true talk, now. How much dost thou in thy heart believe of Mother Gunga?"

"All that our priest says. London is London, Sahib. Sydney is Sydney, and Port Darwin is Port Darwin. Also Mother Gunga is Mother Gunga, and when I come back to her banks I know this and worship. In London I did poo-jah to the big temple by the river for the sake of the God within. . . . Yes, I will not take the cushions in the dinghy."

Findlayson mounted his horse and trotted to the shed of a bungalow that he shared with his assistant. The place had become home to him in the last three years. He had grilled in the heat, sweated in the rains, and shivered with fever under the rude thatch roof; the lime-wash beside the door was covered with rough drawings and formulæ, and the sentry-path trodden in the matting of the verandah showed where he had walked alone. There is no eight-hour limit to an engineer's work, and the evening meal with Hitchcock was eaten booted and spurred: over their cigars they listened to the hum of the village as the gangs came up from the river-bed and the lights began to twinkle.

"Peroo has gone up the spurs in your dinghy. He's taken a couple of nephews with him, and

he's lolling in the stern like a commodore," said Hitchcock.

"That's all right. He's got something on his mind. You'd think that ten years in the British India boats would have knocked most of his religion out of him."

"So it has," said Hitchcock, chuckling. "I overheard him the other day in the middle of a most atheistical talk with that fat old *guru* of theirs. Peroo denied the efficacy of prayer; and wanted the *guru* to go to sea and watch a gale out with him, and see if he could stop a monsoon."

"All the same, if you carried off his *guru* he'd leave us like a shot. He was yarning away to me about praying to the dome of St. Paul's when he was in London."

"He told me that the first time he went into the engine-room of a steamer, when he was a boy, he prayed to the low-pressure cylinder."

"Not half a bad thing to pray to, either. He's propitiating his own Gods now, and he wants to know what Mother Gunga will think of a bridge being run across her. Who's there?" A shadow darkened the doorway, and a telegram was put into Hitchcock's hand.

"She ought to be pretty well used to it by this time. Only a *tar*. It ought to be Ralli's answer about the new rivets. . . . Great Heavens!" Hitchcock jumped to his feet.

"What is it?" said the senior, and took the form. "*That's* what Mother Gunga thinks, is it," he said, reading. "Keep cool, young 'un. We've got all our work cut out for us. Let's see. Muir wired half an hour ago: '*Floods on the Ramgunga. Look out.*' Well, that gives us — one, two — nine and a half for the flood to reach Melipur Ghaut and seven's sixteen and a half to Lataoli — say fifteen hours before it comes down to us."

"Curse that hill-fed sewer of a Ramgunga! Findlayson, this is two months before anything could have been expected, and the left bank is littered up with stuff still. Two full months before the time!"

"That's why it comes. I've only known Indian rivers for five-and-twenty years, and I don't pretend to understand. Here comes another *tar*." Findlayson opened the telegram. "Cockran, this time, from the Ganges Canal: '*Heavy rains here. Bad.*' He might have saved the last word. Well, we don't want to know any more. We've got to work the gangs all night and clean up the river-bed. You'll take the east bank and work out to meet me in the middle. Get everything that floats below the bridge: we shall have quite enough river-craft coming down adrift anyhow, without letting the stone-boats ram the piers. What have you got on the east bank that needs looking after?"

"Pontoon — one big pontoon with the overhead crane on it. T'other overhead crane on the mended pontoon, with the cart-road rivets from Twenty to Twenty-three piers — two construction lines, and a turning-spur. The pilework must take its chance," said Hitchcock.

"All right. Roll up everything you can lay hands on. We'll give the gang fifteen minutes more to eat their grub."

Close to the verandah stood a big night-gong, never used except for flood, or fire in the village. Hitchcock had called for a fresh horse, and was off to his side of the bridge when Findlayson took the cloth-bound stick and smote with the rubbing stroke that brings out the full thunder of the metal.

Long before the last rumble ceased every night-gong in the village had taken up the warning. To these were added the hoarse screaming of conches in the little temples; the throbbing of drums and tom-toms; and, from the European quarters, where the riveters lived, McCartney's bugle, a weapon of offence on Sundays and festivals, brayed desperately, calling to "Stables." Engine after engine toiling home along the spurs at the end of her day's work whistled in answer till the whistles were answered from the far bank. Then the big gong thundered thrice for a sign that it was flood and not fire; conch, drum, and whistle echoed the call, and the village quivered to the sound of bare

feet running upon soft earth. The order in all cases was to stand by the day's work and wait instructions. The gangs poured by in the dusk; men stopping to knot a loin-cloth or fasten a sandal; gang-foremen shouting to their subordinates as they ran or paused by the tool-issue sheds for bars and mattocks; locomotives creeping down their tracks wheel-deep in the crowd; till the brown torrent disappeared into the dusk of the river-bed, raced over the pilework, swarmed along the lattices, clustered by the cranes, and stood still — each man in his place.

Then the troubled beating of the gong carried the order to take up everything and bear it beyond high-water mark, and the flare-lamps broke out by the hundred between the webs of dull iron as the riveters began a night's work, racing against the flood that was to come. The girders of the three centre piers — those that stood on the cribs — were all but in position. They needed just as many rivets as could be driven into them, for the flood would assuredly wash out their supports, and the ironwork would settle down on the caps of stone if they were not blocked at the ends. A hundred crowbars strained at the sleepers of the temporary line that fed the unfinished piers. It was heaved up in lengths, loaded into trucks, and backed up the bank beyond flood-level by the groaning locomotives. The tool-sheds on the

sands melted away before the attack of shouting armies, and with them went the stacked ranks of Government stores, iron-bound boxes of rivets, pliers, cutters, duplicate parts of the riveting-machines, spare pumps and chains. The big crane would be the last to be shifted, for she was hoisting all the heavy stuff up to the main structure of the bridge. The concrete blocks on the fleet of stone-boats were dropped overside, where there was any depth of water, to guard the piers, and the empty boats themselves were poled under the bridge down-stream. It was here that Peroo's pipe shrilled loudest, for the first stroke of the big gong had brought the dinghy back at racing speed, and Peroo and his people were stripped to the waist, working for the honour and credit which are better than life.

"I knew she would speak," he cried. "*I* knew, but the telegraph gives us good warning. O sons of unthinkable begetting — children of unspeakable shame — are we here for the look of the thing?" It was two feet of wire-rope frayed at the ends, and it did wonders as Peroo leaped from gunnel to gunnel, shouting the language of the sea.

Findlayson was more troubled for the stone-boats than anything else. McCartney, with his gangs, was blocking up the ends of the three doubtful spans, but boats adrift, if the flood chanced to

be a high one, might endanger the girders; and there was a very fleet in the shrunken channel.

"Get them behind the swell of the guard-tower," he shouted down to Peroo. "It will be dead-water there. Get them below the bridge."

"*Accha!* [Very good.] *I* know; we are mooring them with wire-rope," was the answer. "Heh! Listen to the Chota Sahib. He is working hard."

From across the river came an almost continuous whistling of locomotives, backed by the rumble of stone. Hitchcock at the last minute was spending a few hundred more trucks of Tarakee stone in reinforcing his spurs and embankments.

"The bridge challenges Mother Gunga," said Peroo, with a laugh. "But when *she* talks I know whose voice will be the loudest."

For hours the naked men worked, screaming and shouting under the lights. It was a hot, moonless night; the end of it was darkened by clouds and a sudden squall that made Findlayson very grave.

"She moves!" said Peroo, just before the dawn. "Mother Gunga is awake! Hear!" He dipped his hand over the side of a boat and the current mumbled on it. A little wave hit the side of a pier with a crisp slap.

"Six hours before her time," said Findlayson, mopping his forehead savagely. "Now we can't

depend on anything. We'd better clear all hands out of the river-bed."

Again the big gong beat, and a second time there was the rushing of naked feet on earth and ringing iron; the clatter of tools ceased. In the silence, men heard the dry yawn of water crawling over thirsty sand.

Foreman after foreman shouted to Findlayson, who had posted himself by the guard-tower, that his section of the river-bed had been cleaned out, and when the last voice dropped Findlayson hurried over the bridge till the iron plating of the permanent way gave place to the temporary plank-walk over the three centre piers, and there he met Hitchcock.

"'All clear your side?" said Findlayson. The whisper rang in the box of latticework.

"Yes, and the east channel's filling now. We're utterly out of our reckoning. When is this thing down on us?"

"There's no saying. She's filling as fast as she can. Look!" Findlayson pointed to the planks below his feet, where the sand, burned and defiled by months of work, was beginning to whisper and fizz.

"What orders?" said Hitchcock.

"Call the roll — count stores — sit on your hunkers — and pray for the bridge. That's all I can think of. Good night. Don't risk your life

trying to fish out anything that may go down-stream."

"Oh, I'll be as prudent as you are! 'Night. Heavens, how she's filling! Here's the rain in earnest!"

Findlayson picked his way back to his bank, sweeping the last of McCartney's riveters before him. The gangs had spread themselves along the embankments, regardless of the cold rain of the dawn, and there they waited for the flood. Only Peroo kept his men together behind the swell of the guard-tower, where the stone-boats lay tied fore and aft with hawsers, wire-rope, and chains.

A shrill wail ran along the line, growing to a yell, half fear and half wonder: the face of the river whitened from bank to bank between the stone facings, and the far-away spurs went out in spouts of foam. Mother Gunga had come bank-high in haste, and a wall of chocolate-coloured water was her messenger. There was a shriek above the roar of the water, the complaint of the spans coming down on their blocks as the cribs were whirled out from under their bellies. The stone-boats groaned and ground each other in the eddy that swung round the abutment, and their clumsy masts rose higher and higher against the dim sky-line.

"Before she was shut between these walls we knew what she would do. Now she is thus

cramped God only knows what she will do!" said Peroo, watching the furious turmoil round the guard-tower. "Ohé! Fight, then! Fight hard, for it is thus that a woman wears herself out."

But Mother Gunga would not fight as Peroo desired. After the first down-stream plunge there came no more walls of water, but the river lifted herself bodily, as a snake when she drinks in mid-summer, plucking and fingering along the revetments, and banking up behind the piers till even Findlayson began to recalculate the strength of his work.

When day came the village gasped. "Only last night," men said, turning to each other, "it was as a town in the river-bed! Look now!"

And they looked and wondered afresh at the deep water, the racing water that licked the throat of the piers. The farther bank was veiled by rain, into which the bridge ran out and vanished; the spurs up-stream were marked by no more than eddies and spoutings, and down-stream the pent river, once freed of her guide-lines, had spread like a sea to the horizon. Then hurried by, rolling in the water, dead men and oxen together, with here and there a patch of thatched roof that melted when it touched a pier.

"Big flood," said Peroo, and Findlayson nodded. It was as big a flood as he had any wish

to watch. His bridge would stand what was upon her now, but not very much more, and if by any of a thousand chances there happened to be a weakness in the embankments, Mother Gunga would carry his honour to the sea with the other raffle. Worst of all, there was nothing to do except to sit still; and Findlayson sat still under his macintosh till his helmet became pulp on his head, and his boots were over-ankle in mire. He took no count of time, for the river was marking the hours, inch by inch and foot by foot, along the embankment, and he listened, numb and hungry, to the straining of the stone-boats, the hollow thunder under the piers, and the hundred noises that make the full note of a flood. Once a dripping servant brought him food, but he could not eat; and once he thought that he heard a faint toot from a locomotive across the river, and then he smiled. The bridge's failure would hurt his assistant not a little, but Hitchcock was a young man with his big work yet to do. For himself the crash meant everything — everything that made a hard life worth the living. They would say, the men of his own profession . . . he remembered the half-pitying things that he himself had said when Lockhart's new waterworks burst and broke down in brick-heaps and sludge, and Lockhart's spirit broke in him and he died. He remembered what he himself had said when

the Sumao Bridge went out in the big cyclone by the sea; and most he remembered poor Hartopp's face three weeks later, when the shame had marked it. His bridge was twice the size of Hartopp's, and it carried the Findlayson truss as well as the new pier-shoe — the Findlayson bolted shoe. There were no excuses in his service. Government might listen, perhaps, but his own kind would judge him by his bridge, as that stood or fell. He went over it in his head, plate by plate, span by span, brick by brick, pier by pier, remembering, comparing, estimating, and recalculating, lest there should be any mistake; and through the long hours and through the flights of formulæ that danced and wheeled before him a cold fear would come to pinch his heart. His side of the sum was beyond question; but what man knew Mother Gunga's arithmetic? Even as he was making all sure by the multiplication-table, the river might be scooping a pot-hole to the very bottom of any one of those eighty-foot piers that carried his reputation. Again a servant came to him with food, but his mouth was dry, and he could only drink and return to the decimals in his brain. And the river was still rising. Peroo, in a mat shelter-coat, crouched at his feet, watching now his face and now the face of the river, but saying nothing.

At last the Lascar rose and floundered through

the mud towards the village, but he was careful to leave an ally to watch the boats.

Presently he returned, most irreverently driving before him the priest of his creed — a fat old man, with a grey beard that whipped the wind with the wet cloth that blew over his shoulder. Never was seen so lamentable a *guru*.

"What good are offerings and little kerosene lamps and dry grain," shouted Peroo, "if squatting in the mud is all that thou canst do? Thou hast dealt long with the Gods when they were contented and well-wishing. Now they are angry. Speak to them!"

"What is a man against the wrath of Gods?" whined the priest, cowering as the wind took him. "Let me go to the temple, and I will pray there."

"Son of a pig, pray *here!* Is there no return for salt fish and curry powder and dried onions? Call aloud! Tell Mother Gunga we have had enough. Bid her be still for the night. I cannot pray, but I have been serving in the Kumpani's boats, and when men did not obey my orders I —" A flourish of the wire-rope colt rounded the sentence, and the priest, breaking free from his disciple, fled to the village.

"Fat pig!" said Peroo. "After all that we have done for him! When the flood is down I will see to it that we get a new *guru*. Finlinson Sahib, it darkens for night now, and since yester

day nothing has been eaten. Be wise, Sahib. No man can endure watching and great thinking on an empty belly. Lie down, Sahib. The river will do what the river will do."

"The bridge is mine; I cannot leave it."

"Wilt thou hold it up with thy hands, then?" said Peroo, laughing. "I was troubled for my boats and sheers *before* the flood came. Now we are in the hands of the Gods. The Sahib will not eat and lie down? Take these, then. They are meat and good toddy together, and they kill all weariness, besides the fever that follows the rain. I have eaten nothing else to-day at all."

He took a small tin tobacco-box from his sodden waist-belt and thrust it into Findlayson's hand, saying: "Nay, do not be afraid. It is no more than opium — clean Malwa opium!"

Findlayson shook two or three of the dark-brown pellets into his hand, and hardly knowing what he did, swallowed them. The stuff was at least a good guard against fever — the fever that was creeping upon him out of the wet mud — and he had seen what Peroo could do in the stewing mists of autumn on the strength of a dose from the tin box.

Peroo nodded with bright eyes. "In a little — in a little the Sahib will find that he thinks well again. I too will —" He dived into his treasure-box, resettled the rain-coat over his head,

and squatted down to watch the boats. It was too dark now to see beyond the first pier, and the night seemed to have given the river new strength. Findlayson stood with his chin on his chest, thinking. There was one point about one of the piers — the seventh — that he had not fully settled in his mind. The figures would not shape themselves to the eye except one by one and at enormous intervals of time. There was a sound rich and mellow in his ears like the deepest note of a double-bass — an entrancing sound upon which he pondered for several hours, as it seemed. Then Peroo was at his elbow, shouting that a wire hawser had snapped and the stone-boats were loose. Findlayson saw the fleet open and swing out fanwise to a long-drawn shriek of wire straining across gunnels.

"A tree hit them. They will all go," cried Peroo. "The main hawser has parted. What does the Sahib do?"

An immensely complex plan had suddenly flashed into Findlayson's mind. He saw the ropes running from boat to boat in straight lines and angles — each rope a line of white fire. But there was one rope which was the master rope. He could see that rope. If he could pull it once, it was absolutely and mathematically certain that the disordered fleet would reassemble itself in the backwater behind the guard-tower. But why, he

wondered, was Peroo clinging so desperately to his waist as he hastened down the bank? It was necessary to put the Lascar aside, gently and slowly, because it was necessary to save the boats, and, further, to demonstrate the extreme ease of the problem that looked so difficult. And then — but it was of no conceivable importance — a wire-rope raced through his hand, burning it, the high bank disappeared, and with it all the slowly dispersing factors of the problem. He was sitting in the rainy darkness — sitting in a boat that spun like a top, and Peroo was standing over him.

"I had forgotten," said the Lascar, slowly, "that to those fasting and unused, the opium is worse than any wine. Those who die in Gunga go to the Gods. Still, I have no desire to present myself before such great ones. Can the Sahib swim?"

"What need? He can fly — fly as swiftly as the wind," was the thick answer.

"He is mad!" muttered Peroo, under his breath. "And he threw me aside like a bundle of dung-cakes. Well, he will not know his death. The boat cannot live an hour here even if she strike nothing. It is not good to look at death with a clear eye."

He refreshed himself again from the tin box, squatted down in the bows of the reeling, pegged,

and stitched craft, staring through the mist at the nothing that was there. A warm drowsiness crept over Findlayson, the Chief Engineer, whose duty was with his bridge. The heavy raindrops struck him with a thousand tingling little thrills, and the weight of all time since time was made hung heavy on his eyelids. He thought and perceived that he was perfectly secure, for the water was so solid that a man could surely step out upon it, and, standing still with his legs apart to keep his balance — this was the most important point — would be borne with great and easy speed to the shore. But yet a better plan came to him. It needed only an exertion of will for the soul to hurl the body ashore as wind drives paper, to waft it kite-fashion to the bank. Thereafter — the boat spun dizzily — suppose the high wind got under the freed body? Would it tower up like a kite and pitch headlong on the far-away sands, or would it duck about, beyond control, through all eternity? Findlayson gripped the gunnel to anchor himself, for it seemed that he was on the edge of taking the flight before he had settled all his plans. Opium has more effect on the white man than the black. Peroo was only comfortably indifferent to accidents. "She cannot live," he grunted. "Her seams open already. If she were even a dinghy with oars we could have ridden it out; but a box with holes is no good. Finlinson Sahib, she fills."

"*Accha!* I am going away. Come thou also."

In his mind, Findlayson had already escaped from the boat, and was circling high in air to find a rest for the sole of his foot. His body — he was really sorry for its gross helplessness — lay in the stern, the water rushing about its knees.

"How very ridiculous!" he said to himself, from his eyrie — "that — is Findlayson — chief of the Kashi Bridge. The poor beast is going to be drowned, too. Drowned when it's close to shore. I'm — I'm on shore already. Why doesn't it come along?"

To his intense disgust, he found his soul back in his body again, and that body spluttering and choking in deep water. The pain of the reunion was atrocious, but it was necessary, also, to fight for the body. He was conscious of grasping wildly at wet sand, and striding prodigiously, as one strides in a dream, to keep foothold in the swirling water, till at last he hauled himself clear of the hold of the river, and dropped, panting, on wet earth.

"Not this night," said Peroo, in his ear. "The Gods have protected us." The Lascar moved his feet cautiously, and they rustled among dried stumps. "This is some island of last year's indigo-crop," he went on. "We shall find no men here; but have great care, Sahib; all the snakes of a hundred miles have been flooded out. Here

comes the lightning, on the heels of the wind. Now we shall be able to look; but walk carefully."

Findlayson was far and far beyond any fear of snakes, or indeed any merely human emotion. He saw, after he had rubbed the water from his eyes, with an immense clearness, and trod, so it seemed to himself, with world-encompassing strides. Somewhere in the night of time he had built a bridge — a bridge that spanned illimitable levels of shining seas; but the Deluge had swept it away, leaving this one island under heaven for Findlayson and his companion, sole survivors of the breed of Man.

An incessant lightning, forked and blue, showed all that there was to be seen on the little patch in the flood — a clump of thorn, a clump of swaying creaking bamboos, and a grey gnarled peepul overshadowing a Hindoo shrine, from whose dome floated a tattered red flag. The holy man whose summer resting-place it was had long since abandoned it, and the weather had broken the red-daubed image of his god. The two men stumbled, heavy-limbed and heavy-eyed, over the ashes of a brick-set cooking-place, and dropped down under the shelter of the branches, while the rain and river roared together.

The stumps of the indigo crackled, and there was a smell of cattle, as a huge and dripping Brahminee bull shouldered his way under the tree.

The flashes revealed the trident mark of Shiva on his flank, the insolence of head and hump, the luminous stag-like eyes, the brow crowned with a wreath of sodden marigold blooms, and the silky dewlap that almost swept the ground. There was a noise behind him of other beasts coming up from the flood-line through the thicket, a sound of heavy feet and deep breathing.

"Here be more beside ourselves," said Findlayson, his head against the tree-pole, looking through half-shut eyes, wholly at ease.

"Truly," said Peroo, thickly, "and no small ones."

"What are they, then? I do not see clearly."

"The Gods. Who else? Look!"

"Ah, true! The Gods surely — the Gods." Findlayson smiled as his head fell forward on his chest. Peroo was eminently right. After the Flood, who should be alive in the land except the Gods that made it — the Gods to whom his village prayed nightly — the Gods who were in all men's mouths and about all men's ways. He could not raise his head or stir a finger for the trance that held him, and Peroo was smiling vacantly at the lightning.

The Bull paused by the shrine, his head lowered to the damp earth. A green Parrot in the branches preened his wet wings and screamed against the thunder as the circle under the tree

filled with the shifting shadows of beasts. There was a black Buck at the Bull's heels — such a Buck as Findlayson in his far-away life upon earth might have seen in dreams — a Buck with a royal head, ebon back, silver belly, and gleaming straight horns. Beside him, her head bowed to the ground, the green eyes burning under the heavy brows, with restless tail switching the dead grass, paced a Tigress, full-bellied and deep-jowled.

The Bull crouched beside the shrine, and there leaped from the darkness a monstrous grey Ape, who seated himself man-wise in the place of the fallen image, and the rain spilled like jewels from the hair of his neck and shoulders.

Other shadows came and went behind the circle, among them a drunken Man flourishing staff and drinking-bottle. Then a hoarse bellow broke out from near the ground. "The flood lessens even now," it cried. "Hour by hour the water falls, and their bridge still stands!"

"My bridge," said Findlayson to himself. "That must be very old work now. What have the Gods to do with my bridge?"

His eyes rolled in the darkness following the roar. A Mugger — the blunt-nosed, ford-haunting Mugger of the Ganges — draggled herself before the beasts, lashing furiously to right and left with her tail.

"They have made it too strong for me. In all

this night I have only torn away a handful of planks. The walls stand. The towers stand. They have chained my flood, and the river is not free any more. Heavenly Ones, take this yoke away! Give me clear water between bank and bank! It is I, Mother Gunga, that speak. The Justice of the Gods! Deal me the Justice of the Gods!"

"What said I?" whispered Peroo. "This is in truth a Punchayet of the Gods. Now we know that all the world is dead, save you and I, Sahib."

The Parrot screamed and fluttered again, and the Tigress, her ears flat to her head, snarled wickedly.

Somewhere in the shadow, a great trunk and gleaming tusks swayed to and fro, and a low gurgle broke the silence that followed on the snarl.

"We be here," said a deep voice, "the Great Ones. One only and very many. Shiv, my father, is here, with Indra. Kali has spoken already. Hanuman listens also."

"Kashi is without her Kotwal to-night," shouted the Man with the drinking-bottle, flinging his staff to the ground, while the island rang to the baying of hounds. "Give her the Justice of the Gods."

"Ye were still when they polluted my waters," the great Crocodile bellowed. "Ye made no sign when my river was trapped between the walls. I had no help save my own strength, and that failed — the strength of Mother Gunga failed — before

their guard-towers. What could I do? I have done everything. Finish now, Heavenly Ones!"

"I brought the death; I rode the spotted sickness from hut to hut of their workmen, and yet they would not cease." A nose-slitten, hide-worn Ass, lame, scissor-legged, and galled, limped forward. "I cast the death at them out of my nostrils, but they would not cease."

Peroo would have moved, but the opium lay heavy upon him.

"Bah!" he said, spitting. "Here is Sitala herself; Mata — the small-pox. Has the Sahib a handkerchief to put over his face?"

"Little help! They fed me the corpses for a month, and I flung them out on my sand-bars, but their work went forward. Demons they are, and sons of demons! And ye left Mother Gunga alone for their fire-carriage to make a mock of. The Justice of the Gods on the bridge-builders!"

The Bull turned the cud in his mouth and answered slowly: "If the Justice of the Gods caught all who made a mock of holy things there would be many dark altars in the land, mother."

"But this goes beyond a mock," said the Tigress, darting forward a griping paw. "Thou knowest, Shiv, and ye, too, Heavenly Ones; ye know that they have defiled Gunga. Surely they must come to the Destroyer. Let Indra judge."

The Buck made no movement as he answered: "How long has this evil been?"

"Three years, as men count years," said the Mugger, close pressed to the earth.

"Does Mother Gunga die, then, in a year, that she is so anxious to see vengeance now? The deep sea was where she runs but yesterday, and to-morrow the sea shall cover her again as the Gods count that which men call time. Can any say that this their bridge endures till to-morrow?" said the Buck.

There was a long hush, and in the clearing of the storm the full moon stood up above the dripping trees.

"Judge ye, then," said the River, sullenly. "I have spoken my shame. The flood falls still. I can do no more."

"For my own part" — it was the voice of the great Ape seated within the shrine — "it pleases me well to watch these men, remembering that I also builded no small bridge in the world's youth."

"They say, too," snarled the Tiger, "that these men came of the wreck of thy armies, Hanuman, and therefore thou hast aided—"

"They toil as my armies toiled in Lanka, and they believe that their toil endures. Indra is too high, but Shiv, thou knowest how the land is threaded with their fire-carriages."

"Yea, I know," said the Bull. "Their Gods instructed them in the matter."

A laugh ran round the circle.

"Their Gods! What should their Gods know? They were born yesterday, and those that made them are scarcely yet cold," said the Mugger. "To-morrow their Gods will die."

"Ho!" said Peroo. "Mother Gunga talks good talk. I told that to the padre-sahib who preached on the *Mombassa*, and he asked the Burra Malum to put me in irons for a great rudeness."

"Surely they make these things to please their Gods," said the Bull again.

"Not altogether," the Elephant rolled forth. "It is for the profit of my mahajuns — my fat money-lenders that worship me at each new year, when they draw my image at the head of the account-books. I, looking over their shoulders by lamplight, see that the names in the books are those of men in far places — for all the towns are drawn together by the fire-carriage, and the money comes and goes swiftly, and the account-books grow as fat as — myself. And I, who am Ganesh of Good Luck, I bless my peoples."

"They have changed the face of the land — which is my land. They have killed and made new towns on my banks," said the Mugger.

"It is but the shifting of a little dirt. Let the

dirt dig in the dirt if it pleases the dirt," answered the Elephant.

"But afterwards?" said the Tiger. "Afterwards they will see that Mother Gunga can avenge no insult, and they fall away from her first, and later from us all, one by one. In the end, Ganesh, we are left with naked altars."

The drunken Man staggered to his feet, and hiccupped vehemently.

"Kali lies. My sister lies. Also this my stick is the Kotwal of Kashi, and he keeps tally of my pilgrims. When the time comes to worship Bhairon—and it is always time—the fire-carriages move one by one, and each bears a thousand pilgrims. They do not come afoot any more, but rolling upon wheels, and my honour is increased."

"Gunga, I have seen thy bed at Pryag black with the pilgrims," said the Ape, leaning forward, "and but for the fire-carriage they would have come slowly and in fewer numbers. Remember."

"They come to me always," Bhairon went on thickly. "By day and night they pray to me, all the Common People in the fields and the roads. Who is like Bhairon to-day? What talk is this of changing faiths? Is my staff Kotwal of Kashi for nothing? He keeps the tally, and he says that never were so many altars as to-day, and the fire-carriage serves them well. Bhairon am I—Bhai-

ron of the Common People, and the chiefest of the Heavenly Ones to-day. Also my staff says — "

"Peace, thou!" lowed the Bull. "The worship of the schools is mine, and they talk very wisely, asking whether I be one or many, as is the delight of my people, and ye know what I am. Kali, my wife, thou knowest also."

"Yea, I know," said the Tigress, with lowered head.

"Greater am I than Gunga also. For ye know who moved the minds of men that they should count Gunga holy among the rivers. Who die in that water — ye know how men say — come to us without punishment, and Gunga knows that the fire-carriage has borne to her scores upon scores of such anxious ones; and Kali knows that she has held her chiefest festivals among the pilgrimages that are fed by the fire-carriage. Who smote at Pooree, under the Image there, her thousands in a day and a night, and bound the sickness to the wheels of the fire-carriages, so that it ran from one end of the land to the other? Who but Kali? Before the fire-carriage came it was a heavy toil. The fire-carriages have served thee well, Mother of Death. But I speak for mine own altars, who am not Bhairon of the Common Folk, but Shiv. Men go to and fro, making words and telling talk of strange Gods, and I listen. Faith follows faith among my people in the schools, and I have no

anger; for when all words are said, and the new talk is ended, to Shiv men return at the last."

"True. It is true," murmured Hanuman. "To Shiv and to the others, mother, they return. I creep from temple to temple in the North, where they worship one God and His Prophet; and presently my image is alone within their shrines."

"Small thanks," said the Buck, turning his head slowly. "I am that One and His Prophet also."

"Even so, father," said Hanuman. "And to the South I go who am the oldest of the Gods as men know the Gods, and presently I touch the shrines of the New Faith and the Woman whom we know is hewn twelve-armed, and still they call her Mary."

"Small thanks, brother," said the Tigress. "I am that Woman."

"Even so, sister; and I go West among the fire-carriages, and stand before the bridge-builders in many shapes, and because of me they change their faiths and are very wise. Ho! ho! I am the builder of bridges, indeed — bridges between this and that, and each bridge leads surely to Us in the end. Be content, Gunga. Neither these men nor those that follow them mock thee at all."

"Am I alone, then, Heavenly Ones? Shall I smooth out my flood lest unhappily I bear away their walls? Will Indra dry my springs in the hills and make me crawl humbly between their

wharfs? Shall I bury me in the sand ere I offend?"

"And all for the sake of a little iron bar with the fire-carriage atop. Truly, Mother Gunga is always young!" said Ganesh the Elephant. "A child had not spoken more foolishly. Let the dirt dig in the dirt ere it return to the dirt. I know only that my people grow rich and praise me. Shiv has said that the men of the schools do not forget; Bhairon is content for his crowd of the Common People; and Hanuman laughs."

"Surely I laugh," said the Ape. "My altars are few beside those of Ganesh or Bhairon, but the fire-carriages bring me new worshippers from beyond the Black Water — the men who believe that their God is toil. I run before them beckoning, and they follow Hanuman."

"Give them the toil that they desire, then," said the River. "Make a bar across my flood and throw the water back upon the bridge. Once thou wast strong in Lanka, Hanuman. Stoop and lift my bed."

"Who gives life can take life." The Ape scratched in the mud with a long forefinger. "And yet, who would profit by the killing? Very many would die."

There came up from the water a snatch of a love-song such as the boys sing when they watch their cattle in the noon heats of late spring. The

Parrot screamed joyously, sidling along his branch with lowered head as the song grew louder, and in a patch of clear moonlight stood revealed the young herd, the darling of the Gopis, the idol of dreaming maids and of mothers ere their children are born — Krishna the Well-beloved. He stooped to knot up his long wet hair, and the Parrot fluttered to his shoulder.

"Fleeting and singing, and singing and fleeting," hiccupped Bhairon. "Those make thee late for the council, brother."

"And then?" said Krishna, with a laugh, throwing back his head. "Ye can do little without me or Karma here." He fondled the Parrot's plumage and laughed again. "What is this sitting and talking together? I heard Mother Gunga roaring in the dark, and so came quickly from a hut where I lay warm. And what have ye done to Karma, that he is so wet and silent? And what does Mother Gunga here? Are the heavens full that ye must come paddling in the mud beast-wise? Karma, what do they do?"

"Gunga has prayed for a vengeance on the bridge-builders, and Kali is with her. Now she bids Hanuman whelm the bridge, that her honour may be made great," cried the Parrot. "I waited here, knowing that thou wouldst come, O my master!"

"And the Heavenly Ones said nothing? Did

Gunga and the Mother of Sorrows out-talk them? Did none speak for my people?"

"Nay," said Ganesh, moving uneasily from foot to foot; "I said it was but dirt at play, and why should we stamp it flat?"

"I was content to let them toil — well content," said Hanuman.

"What had I to do with Gunga's anger?" said the Bull.

"I am Bhairon of the Common Folk, and this my staff is Kotwal of all Kashi. I spoke for the Common People."

"Thou?" The young God's eyes sparkled.

"Am I not the first of the Gods in their mouths to-day?" returned Bhairon, unabashed. "For the sake of the Common People I said — very many wise things which I have now forgotten, but this my staff —"

Krishna turned impatiently, saw the Mugger at his feet, and kneeling, slipped an arm round the cold neck. "Mother," he said gently, "get thee to thy flood again. The matter is not for thee. What harm shall thy honour take of this live dirt? Thou hast given them their fields new year after year, and by thy flood they are made strong. They come all to thee at the last. What need to slay them now? Have pity, mother, for a little — and it is only for a little."

"If it be only for a little —" the slow beast began.

"Are they Gods, then?" Krishna returned with a laugh, his eyes looking into the dull eyes of the River. "Be certain that it is only for a little. The Heavenly Ones have heard thee, and presently justice will be done. Go now, mother, to the flood again. Men and cattle are thick on the waters — the banks fall — the villages melt because of thee."

"But the bridge — the bridge stands." The Mugger turned grunting into the undergrowth as Krishna rose.

"It is ended," said the Tigress, viciously. "There is no more justice from the Heavenly Ones. Ye have made shame and sport of Gunga, who asked no more than a few score lives."

"Of *my* people — who lie under the leaf-roofs of the village yonder — of the young girls, and the young men who sing to them in the dark — of the child that will be born next morn — of that which was begotten to-night," said Krishna. "And when all is done, what profit? To-morrow sees them at work. Ay, if ye swept the bridge out from end to end they would begin anew. Hear me! Bhairon is drunk always. Hanuman mocks his people with new riddles."

"Nay, but they are very old ones," the Ape said, laughing.

"Shiv hears the talk of the schools and the dreams of the holy men; Ganesh thinks only of

his fat traders; but I — I live with these my people, asking for no gifts, and so receiving them hourly."

"And very tender art thou of thy people," said the Tigress.

"They are my own. The old women dream of me turning in their sleep; the maids look and listen for me when they go to fill their lotahs by the river. I walk by the young men waiting without the gates at dusk, and I call over my shoulder to the white-beards. Ye know, Heavenly Ones, that I alone of us all walk upon the earth continually, and have no pleasure in our heavens so long as a green blade springs here, or there are two voices at twilight in the standing crops. Wise are ye, but ye live far off, forgetting whence ye came. So do I not forget. And the fire-carriage feeds your shrines, ye say? And the fire-carriages bring a thousand pilgrims where but ten came in the old years? True. That is true, to-day."

"But to-morrow they are dead, brother," said Ganesh.

"Peace!" said the Bull, as Hanuman leaned forward again. "And to-morrow, beloved — what of to-morrow?"

"This only. A new word creeping from mouth to mouth among the Common Folk — a word that neither man nor God can lay hold of — an

evil word — a little lazy word among the Common Folk, saying (and none know who set that word afoot) that they weary of ye, Heavenly Ones."

The Gods laughed together softly. "And then, beloved?" they said.

"And to cover that weariness they, my people, will bring to thee, Shiv, and to thee, Ganesh, at first greater offerings and a louder noise of worship. But the word has gone abroad, and, after, they will pay fewer dues to your fat Brahmins. Next they will forget your altars, but so slowly that no man can say how his forgetfulness began."

"I knew — I knew! I spoke this also, but they would not hear," said the Tigress. "We should have slain — we should have slain!"

"It is too late now. Ye should have slain at the beginning when the men from across the water had taught our folk nothing. Now my people see their work, and go away thinking. They do not think of the Heavenly Ones altogether. They think of the fire-carriage and the other things that the bridge-builders have done, and when your priests thrust forward hands asking alms, they give a little unwillingly. That is the beginning, among one or two, or five or ten — for I, moving among my people, know what is in their hearts."

"And the end, Jester of the Gods? What shall the end be?" said Ganesh.

"The end shall be as it was in the beginning,

O slothful son of Shiv! The flame shall die upon the altars and the prayer upon the tongue till ye become little Gods again — Gods of the jungle — names that the hunters of rats and noosers of dogs whisper in the thicket and among the caves — rag-Gods, pot Godlings of the tree, and the village-mark, as ye were at the beginning. That is the end, Ganesh, for thee, and for Bhairon — Bhairon of the Common People."

"It is very far away," grunted Bhairon. "Also, it is a lie."

"Many women have kissed Krishna. They told him this to cheer their own hearts when the grey hairs came, and he has told us the tale," said the Bull, below his breath.

"Their Gods came, and we changed them. I took the Woman and made her twelve-armed. So shall we twist all their Gods," said Hanuman.

"Their Gods! This is no question of their Gods — one or three — man or woman. The matter is with the people. *They* move, and not the Gods of the bridge-builders," said Krishna.

"So be it. I have made a man worship the fire-carriage as it stood still breathing smoke, and he knew not that he worshipped me," said Hanuman the Ape. "They will only change a little the names of their Gods. I shall lead the builders of the bridges as of old; Shiv shall be worshipped in the schools by such as doubt and

despise their fellows; Ganesh shall have his mahajuns, and Bhairon the donkey-drivers, the pilgrims, and the sellers of toys. Beloved, they will do no more than change the names, and that we have seen a thousand times."

"Surely they will do no more than change the names," echoed Ganesh; but there was an uneasy movement among the Gods.

"They will change more than the names. Me alone they cannot kill, so long as a maiden and a man meet together or the spring follows the winter rains. Heavenly Ones, not for nothing have I walked upon the earth. My people know not now what they know; but I, who live with them, I read their hearts. Great Kings, the beginning of the end is born already. The fire-carriages shout the names of new Gods that are *not* the old under new names. Drink now and eat greatly! Bathe your faces in the smoke of the altars before they grow cold! Take dues and listen to the cymbals and the drums, Heavenly Ones, while yet there are flowers and songs. As men count time the end is far off; but as we who know reckon it is to-day. I have spoken."

The young God ceased, and his brethren looked at each other long in silence.

"This I have not heard before," Peroo whispered in his companion's ear. "And yet sometimes, when I oiled the brasses in the engine-

room of the *Goorkha*, I have wondered if our priests were so wise — so wise. The day is coming, Sahib. They will be gone by the morning."

A yellow light broadened in the sky, and the tone of the river changed as the darkness withdrew.

Suddenly the Elephant trumpeted aloud as though man had goaded him.

"Let Indra judge. Father of all, speak thou! What of the things we have heard? Has Krishna lied indeed? Or — "

"Ye know," said the Buck, rising to his feet. "Ye know the Riddle of the Gods. When Brahm ceases to dream, the Heavens and the Hells and Earth disappear. Be content. Brahm dreams still. The dreams come and go, and the nature of the dreams changes, but still Brahm dreams. Krishna has walked too long upon earth, and yet I love him the more for the tale he has told. The Gods change, beloved — all save One!"

"Ay, all save one that makes love in the hearts of men," said Krishna, knotting his girdle. "It is but a little time to wait, and ye shall know if I lie."

"Truly it is but a little time, as thou sayest, and we shall know. Get thee to thy huts again, beloved, and make sport for the young things, for

still Brahm dreams. Go, my children! Brahm dreams — and till he wakes the Gods die not."

* * * * * * * * * *

"Whither went they?" said the Lascar, awe-struck, shivering a little with the cold.

"God knows!" said Findlayson. The river and the island lay in full daylight now, and there was never mark of hoof or pug on the wet earth under the peepul. Only a parrot screamed in the branches, bringing down showers of water-drops as he fluttered his wings.

"Up! We are cramped with cold! Has the opium died out? Canst thou move, Sahib?"

Findlayson staggered to his feet and shook himself. His head swam and ached, but the work of the opium was over, and, as he sluiced his forehead in a pool, the Chief Engineer of the Kashi Bridge was wondering how he had managed to fall upon the island, what chances the day offered of return, and, above all, how his work stood.

"Peroo, I have forgotten much. I was under the guard-tower watching the river; and then . . . Did the flood sweep us away?"

"No. The boats broke loose, Sahib, and" (if the Sahib had forgotten about the opium, decidedly Peroo would not remind him) "in striving to retie them, so it seemed to me — but it was dark — a rope caught the Sahib and threw him upon a boat. Considering that we two, with

Hitchcock Sahib, built, as it were, that bridge, I came also upon the boat, which came riding on horseback, as it were, on the nose of this island, and so, splitting, cast us ashore. I made a great cry when the boat left the wharf, and without doubt Hitchcock Sahib will come for us. As for the bridge, so many have died in the building that it cannot fall."

A fierce sun, that drew out all the smell of the sodden land, had followed the storm, and in that clear light there was no room for a man to think of the dreams of the dark. Findlayson stared upstream, across the blaze of moving water, till his eyes ached. There was no sign of any bank to the Ganges, much less of a bridge-line.

"We came down far," he said. "It was wonderful that we were not drowned a hundred times."

"That was the least of the wonder, for no man dies before his time. I have seen Sydney, I have seen London, and twenty great ports, but"— Peroo looked at the damp, discoloured shrine under the peepul —"never man has seen that we saw here."

"What?"

"Has the Sahib forgotten; or do we black men only see the Gods?"

"There was a fever upon me." Findlayson was still looking uneasily across the water. "It seemed that the island was full of beasts and men

talking, but I do not remember. A boat could live in this water now, I think."

"Oho! Then it *is* true. 'When Brahm ceases to dream, the Gods die.' Now I know, indeed, what he meant. Once, too, the *guru* said as much to me; but then I did not understand. Now I am wise."

"What?" said Findlayson, over his shoulder.

Peroo went on as if he were talking to himself. "Six — seven — ten monsoons since, I was watch on the fo'c'sle of the *Rewah* — the Kumpani's big boat — and there was a big *tufan;* green and black water beating, and I held fast to the life-lines, choking under the waters. Then I thought of the Gods — of Those whom we saw to-night" — he stared curiously at Findlayson's back, but the white man was looking across the flood. "Yes, I say of Those whom we saw this night past, and I called upon Them to protect me. And while I prayed, still keeping my lookout, a big wave came and threw me forward upon the ring of the great black bow-anchor, and the *Rewah* rose high and high, leaning towards the left-hand side, and the water drew away from beneath her nose, and I lay upon my belly, holding the ring, and looking down into those great deeps. Then I thought, even in the face of death: If I lose hold I die, and for me neither the *Rewah* nor my place by the galley where the rice is cooked, nor Bombay, nor

Calcutta, nor even London, will be any more for me. 'How shall I be sure,' I said, 'that the Gods to whom I pray will abide at all?' This I thought, and the *Rewah* dropped her nose as a hammer falls, and all the sea came in and slid me backwards along the fo'c'sle and over the break of the fo'c'sle, and I very badly bruised my shin against the donkey-engine: but I did not die, and I have seen the Gods. They are good for live men, but for the dead . . . They have spoken Themselves. Therefore, when I come to the village I will beat the *guru* for talking riddles which are no riddles. When Brahm ceases to dream the Gods go."

"Look up-stream. The light blinds. Is there smoke yonder?"

Peroo shaded his eyes with his hands. "He is a wise man and quick. Hitchcock Sahib would not trust a rowboat. He has borrowed the Rao Sahib's steam-launch, and comes to look for us. I have always said that there should have been a steam-launch on the bridge works for us."

The territory of the Rao of Baraon lay within ten miles of the bridge; and Findlayson and Hitchcock had spent a fair portion of their scanty leisure in playing billiards and shooting black-buck with the young man. He had been bearled by an English tutor of sporting tastes for some five or six years, and was now royally wasting the revenues accumulated during his minority by the

Indian Government. His steam-launch, with its silver-plated rails, striped silk awning, and mahogany decks, was a new toy which Findlayson had found horribly in the way when the Rao came to look at the bridge works.

"It's great luck," murmured Findlayson, but he was none the less afraid, wondering what news might be of the bridge.

The gaudy blue-and-white funnel came downstream swiftly. They could see Hitchcock in the bows, with a pair of opera-glasses, and his face was unusually white. Then Peroo hailed, and the launch made for the tail of the island. The Rao Sahib, in tweed shooting-suit and a seven-hued turban, waved his royal hand, and Hitchcock shouted. But he need have asked no questions, for Findlayson's first demand was for his bridge.

"All serene! 'Gad, I never expected to see you again, Findlayson. You're seven koss downstream. Yes; there's not a stone shifted anywhere; but how are you? I borrowed the Rao Sahib's launch, and he was good enough to come along. Jump in."

"Ah, Finlinson, you are very well, eh? That was most unprecedented calamity last night, eh? My royal palace, too, it leaks like the devil, and the crops will also be short all about my country. Now you shall back her out, Hitchcock. I — I do not understand steam-engines. You are wet?

You are cold, Finlinson? I have some things to eat here, and you will take a good drink."

"I'm immensely grateful, Rao Sahib. I believe you've saved my life. How did Hitchcock — "

"Oho! His hair was upon end. He rode to me in the middle of the night and woke me up in the arms of Morpheus. I was most truly concerned, Finlinson, so I came too. My head-priest he is very angry just now. We will go quick, Mister Hitchcock. I am due to attend at twelve forty-five in the state temple, where we sanctify some new idol. If not so I would have asked you to spend the day with me. They are dambore, these religious ceremonies, Finlinson, eh?"

Peroo, well known to the crew, had possessed himself of the inlaid wheel, and was taking the launch craftily up-stream. But while he steered he was, in his mind, handling two feet of partially untwisted wire-rope; and the back upon which he beat was the back of his *guru*.

A WALKING DELEGATE

A WALKING DELEGATE

ACCORDING to the custom of Vermont, Sunday afternoon is salting-time on the farm, and, unless something very important happens, we attend to the salting ourselves. Dave and Pete, the red oxen, are treated first; they stay in the home meadow ready for work on Monday. Then come the cows, with Pan, the calf, who should have been turned into veal long ago, but survived on account of his manners; and lastly the horses, scattered through the seventy acres of the Back Pasture.

You must go down by the brook that feeds the clicking, bubbling water-ram; up through the sugar-bush, where the young maple undergrowth closes round you like a shallow sea; next follow the faint line of an old county-road running past two green hollows fringed with wild rose that mark the cellars of two ruined houses; then by Lost Orchard, where nobody ever comes except in cider-time; then across another brook, and so into the Back Pasture. Half of it is pine and hemlock and spruce, with sumach and little juniper-

bushes, and the other half is grey rock and boulder and moss, with green streaks of brake and swamp; but the horses like it well enough — our own, and the others that are turned down there to feed at fifty cents a week. Most people walk to the Back Pasture, and find it very rough work; but one can get there in a buggy, if the horse knows what is expected of him. The safest conveyance is our coupé. This began life as a buckboard, and we bought it for five dollars from a sorrowful man who had no other sort of possessions; and the seat came off one night when we were turning a corner in a hurry. After that alteration it made a beautiful salting-machine, if you held tight, because there was nothing to catch your feet when you fell out, and the slats rattled tunes.

One Sunday afternoon we went out with the salt as usual. It was a broiling hot day, and we could not find the horses anywhere till we let Tedda Gabler, the bobtailed mare who throws up the dirt with her big hooves exactly as a tedder throws hay, have her head. Clever as she is, she tipped the coupé over in a hidden brook before she came out on a ledge of rock where all the horses had gathered, and were switching flies. The Deacon was the first to call to her. He is a very dark iron-grey four-year-old, son of Grandee. He has been handled since he was two, was driven in a light cart before he was three, and now ranks

as an absolutely steady lady's horse — proof against steam-rollers, grade-crossings, and street processions.

"Salt!" said the Deacon, joyfully. "You're dreffle late, Tedda."

"Any — any place to cramp the coupé?" Tedda panted. "It weighs turr'ble this weather. I'd 'a' come sooner, but they didn't know what they wanted — ner haow. Fell out twice, both of 'em. I don't understand sech foolishness."

"You look consider'ble het up. 'Guess you'd better cramp her under them pines, an' cool off a piece."

Tedda scrambled on the ledge, and cramped the coupé in the shade of a tiny little wood of pines, while my companion and I lay down among the brown, silky needles, and gasped. All the home horses were gathered round us, enjoying their Sunday leisure.

There were Rod and Rick, the seniors on the farm. They were the regular road-pair, bay with black points, full brothers, aged, sons of a Hambletonian sire and a Morgan dam. There were Nip and Tuck, seal-browns, rising six, brother and sister, Black Hawks by birth, perfectly matched, just finishing their education, and as handsome a pair as man could wish to find in a forty-mile drive. There was Muldoon, our ex-car-horse, bought at a venture, and any colour

you choose that is not white; and Tweezy, who comes from Kentucky, with an affliction of his left hip, which makes him a little uncertain how his hind legs are moving. He and Muldoon had been hauling gravel all the week for our new road. The Deacon you know already. Last of all, and eating something, was our faithful Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, the black buggy-horse, who had seen us through every state of weather and road, the horse who was always standing in harness before some door or other — a philosopher with the appetite of a shark and the manners of an archbishop. Tedda Gabler was a new "trade," with a reputation for vice which was really the result of bad driving. She had one working gait, which she could hold till further notice; a Roman nose; a large, prominent eye; a shaving-brush of a tail; and an irritable temper. She took her salt through her bridle; but the others trotted up nuzzling and wickering for theirs, till we emptied it on the clean rocks. They were all standing at ease, on three legs for the most part, talking the ordinary gossip of the Back Pasture — about the scarcity of water, and gaps in the fence, and how the early windfalls tasted that season — when little Rick blew the last few grains of his allowance into a crevice, and said:

"Hurry, boys! 'Might ha' knowed that livery-plug would be around."

We heard a clatter of hooves, and there climbed up from the ravine below a fifty-center transient—a wall-eyed, yellow frame-house of a horse, sent up to board from a livery-stable in town, where they called him "The Lamb," and never let him out except at night and to strangers. My companion, who knew and had broken most of the horses, looked at the ragged hammer-head as it rose, and said quietly:

"Ni-ice beast. Man-eater, if he gets the chance — see his eye. Kicker, too — see his hocks. Western horse."

The animal lumbered up, snuffling and grunting. His feet showed that he had not worked for weeks and weeks, and our creatures drew together significantly.

"As usual," he said, with an underhung sneer—"bowin' your heads before the Oppressor that comes to spend his leisure gloatin' over you."

"Mine's done," said the Deacon; he licked up the remnant of his salt, dropped his nose in his master's hand, and sang a little grace all to himself. The Deacon has the most enchanting manners of any one I know.

"An' fawnin' on them for what is your inalienable right. It's humiliatin'," said the yellow horse, sniffing to see if he could find a few spare grains.

"Go daown hill, then, Boney," the Deacon replied. "Guess you'll find somethin' to eat still,

if yer hain't hogged it all. You've ett more'n any three of us to-day — an' day 'fore that — an' the last two months — sence you've been here."

"I am not addressin' myself to the young an' immature. I am speakin' to those whose opinion *an'* experience commands respect."

I saw Rod raise his head as though he were about to make a remark; then he dropped it again, and stood three-cornered, like a plough-horse. Rod can cover his mile in a shade under three minutes on an ordinary road to an ordinary buggy. He is tremendously powerful behind, but, like most Hambletonians, he grows a trifle sullen as he gets older. No one can love Rod very much; but no one can help respecting him.

"I wish to wake *those*," the yellow horse went on, "to an abidin' sense o' their wrongs an' their injuries an' their outrages."

"Haow's that?" said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, dreamily. He thought Boney was talking of some kind of feed.

"An' when I say outrages and injuries"— Boney waved his tail furiously — "I mean 'em, too. Great Oats! That's just what I *do* mean, plain an' straight."

"The gentleman talks quite earnest," said Tuck, the mare, to Nip, her brother. "There's no doubt thinkin' broadens the horizons o' the mind. His language is quite lofty."

"Hesh, sis," Nip answered. "He hain't widened nothin' 'cep' the circle he's ett in pasture. They feed words fer beddin' where he comes from."

"It's elegant talkin', though," Tuck returned, with an unconvinced toss of her pretty, lean little head.

The yellow horse heard her, and struck an attitude which he meant to be extremely impressive. It made him look as though he had been badly stuffed.

"Now I ask you,—I ask you without prejudice an' without favour,—what has Man the Oppressor ever done for you? Are you not inalienably entitled to the free air o' heaven, blowin' acrost this boundless prairie?"

"Hev ye ever wintered here?" said the Deacon, merrily, while the others snickered. "It's kinder cool."

"Not yet," said Boney. "I come from the boundless confines o' Kansas, where the noblest of our kind have their abidin'-place among the sunflowers on the threshold o' the settin' sun in his glory."

"An' they sent you ahead as a sample?" said Rick, with an amused quiver of his long, beautifully groomed tail, as thick and as fine and as wavy as a quadroon's back hair.

"Kansas, sir, needs no adver*tise*ment. Her native sons rely on themselves an' their native sires. Yes, sir."

Then Tweezy lifted up his wise and polite old head. His affliction makes him bashful as a rule, but he is ever the most courteous of horses.

"Excuse me, suh," he said slowly, "but, unless I have been misinfohmed, most of your prominent siahs, suh, are impo'ted from Kentucky; an' *I'm* from Paduky."

There was the least little touch of pride in the last words.

"Any horse dat knows beans," said Muldoon, suddenly (he had been standing with his hairy chin on Tweezy's broad quarters), "gits outer Kansas 'fore dey crip his shoes. I blew in dere from Ioway in de days o' me youth an' innocence, an' I wuz grateful when dey boxed me fer N' York. You can't tell *me* anything about Kansas I don't wanter fergit. De Belt Line stables ain't no Hoffman House, but dey're Vanderbilts 'longside o' Kansas."

"What the horses o' Kansas think to-day, the horses of America will think to-morrow; an' I tell *you* that when the horses of America rise in their might, the day o' the Oppressor is ended."

There was a pause, till Rick said, with a little grunt:

"Ef you put it that way, every one of us has riz in his might, 'cep' Marcus, mebbe. Marky, j ever rise in yer might?"

"Nope," said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus,

thoughtfully quidding over a mouthful of grass. "I seen a heap o' fools try, though."

"You admit that you riz?" said the Kansas horse, excitedly. "Then why — why in Kansas did you ever go under again?"

"'Horse can't walk on his hind legs *all* the time," said the Deacon.

"Not when he's jerked over on his back 'fore he knows what fetched him. We've all done it, Boney," said Rick. "Nip an' Tuck they tried it, spite o' what the Deacon told 'em; an' the Deacon he tried it, spite o' what me an' Rod told him; an' me an' Rod tried it, spite o' what Grandee told us; an' I guess Grandee he tried it, spite o' what his dam told him. It's the same old circus from generation to generation. 'Colt can't see why he's called on to back. Same old rearin' on end — straight up. Same old feelin' that you've bested 'em this time. Same old little yank at your mouth when you're up good an' tall. Same old Pegasus-act, wonderin' where you'll 'light. Same old wop when you hit the dirt with your head where your tail should be, and your in'ards shook up like a bran-mash. Same old voice in your ear: 'Waal, ye little fool, an' what did you reckon to make by that?' We're through with risin' in our might on *this* farm. We go to pole er single, accordin' ez we're hitched."

"An' Man the Oppressor sets an' gloats over

you, same as he's settin' now. Hain't that been your experience, madam?"

This last remark was addressed to Tedda; and any one could see with half an eye that poor, old anxious, fidgety Tedda, stamping at the flies, must have left a wild and tumultuous youth behind her.

"'Pends on the man," she answered, shifting from one foot to the other, and addressing herself to the home horses. "They abused me dreffle when I was young. I guess I was sperrity an' nervous some, but they didn't allow for that. 'Twas in Monroe County, Noo York, an' sence then till I come here, I've run away with more men than 'u'd fill a boardin'-house. Why, the man that sold me here he says to the boss, s' he: 'Mind, now, I've warned you. 'Twon't be none of my fault if she sheds you daown the road. Don't you drive her in a top-buggy, ner 'thout winkers,' s' he, 'ner 'thout this bit, ef you look to come home behind her.' 'N' the fust thing the boss did was to git the top-buggy."

"Can't say as I like top-buggies," said Rick; "they don't balance good."

"Suit me to a ha'ar," said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. "Top-buggy means the baby's in behind, an' I kin stop while she gathers the pretty flowers — yes, an' pick a maouthful, too. The women-folk all say I hev to be humoured, an' — I don't kerry things to the sweatin'-point."

"'Course I've no pre*ju*dice against a top-buggy s' long 's I can see it," Tedda went on quickly. "It's ha'f-seein' the pesky thing bobbin' an' balancin' behind the winkers gits on *my* nerves. Then the boss looked at the bit they'd sold with me, an' s' he: 'Jiminy Christmas! This 'u'd make a clothes-horse stan' 'n end!' Then he gave me a plain bar bit, an' fitted it 's if there was some feelin' to my maouth."

"Hain't ye got any, Miss Tedda?" said Tuck, who has a mouth like velvet, and knows it.

"Might 'a' had, Miss Tuck, but I've forgot. Then he give me an open bridle,— my style's an open bridle — an' — I dunno as I ought to tell this by rights — he — give — me — a kiss."

"My!" said Tuck, "I can't tell fer the shoes o' me what makes some men so fresh."

"Pshaw, sis," said Nip, "what's the sense in actin' so? *You* git a kiss reg'lar 's hitchin'-up time."

"Well, you needn't tell, smarty," said Tuck, with a squeal and a kick.

"I'd heard o' kisses, o' course," Tedda went on, "but they hadn't come my way specially. I don't mind tellin' I was that took aback at that man's doin's he might ha' lit fire-crackers on my saddle. Then we went out jest 's if a kiss was nothin', an' I wasn't three strides into my gait 'fore I felt the boss knoo his business, an' was

trustin' me. So I studied to please him, an' he never took the whip from the dash — a whip drives me plumb distracted — an' the upshot was that — waal, I've come up the Back Pasture today, an' the coupé's tipped clear over twice, an' I've waited till 'twuz fixed each time. You kin judge for yourselves. I don't set up to be no better than my neighbours,— specially with my tail snipped off the way 'tis,— but I want you all to know Tedda's quit fightin' in harness or out of it, 'cep' when there's a born fool in the pasture, stuffin' his stummick with board that ain't rightly hisn, 'cause he hain't earned it."

"Meanin' me, madam?" said the yellow horse.

"Ef the shoe fits, clinch it," said Tedda, snorting. "*I* named no names, though, to be sure, some folks are mean enough an' greedy enough to do 'thout 'em."

"There's a deal to be forgiven to ignorance," said the yellow horse, with an ugly look in his blue eye.

"Seemin'ly, yes; or some folks 'u'd ha' been kicked raound the pasture 'bout onct a minute sence they came — board er no board."

"But what you do *not* understand, if you will excuse me, madam, is that the whole principle o' servitood, which includes keep an' feed, starts from a radically false basis; an' I am proud to say that me an' the majority o' the horses o' Kansas

think the entire concern should be relegated to the limbo of exploded superstitions. I say we're too progressive for that. I say we're too enlightened for that. 'Twas good enough 's long 's we didn't think, but naow — but naow — a new loominary has arisen on the horizon!"

"Meanin' you?" said the Deacon.

"The horses o' Kansas are behind me with their multitoodinous thunderin' hooves, an' we say, simply but grandly, that we take our stand with all four feet on the inalienable rights of the horse, pure and simple,— the high-toned child o' nature, fed by the same wavin' grass, cooled by the same ripplin' brook,— yes, an' warmed by the same gen'rous sun as falls impartially on the outside an' the *in*side of the pampered machine o' the trottin'-track, or the bloated coupé-horses o' these yere Eastern cities. Are we not the same flesh an' blood?"

"Not by a bushel an' a half," said the Deacon, under his breath. "Grandee never was in Kansas."

"My! Ain't that elegant, though, abaout the wavin' grass an' the ripplin' brooks?" Tuck whispered in Nip's ear. "The gentleman's real convincin', *I* think."

"I say we *are* the same flesh an' blood! Are we to be separated, horse from horse, by the artificial barriers of a trottin'-record, or are we to look

down upon each other on the strength o' the gifts o' nature — an extry inch below the knee, or slightly more powerful quarters? What's the use o' them advantages to you? Man the Oppressor comes along, an' sees you're likely an' good-lookin', an' grinds you to the face o' the earth. What for? For his own pleasure: for his own convenience! Young an' old, black an' bay, white an' grey, there's no distinctions made between us. We're ground up together under the remorseless teeth o' the engines of oppression!"

"Guess his breechin' must ha' broke goin' daown-hill," said the Deacon. "Slippery road, maybe, an' the buggy come onter him, an' he didn't know 'nough to hold back. That don't feel like teeth, though. Maybe he busted a shaft, an' it pricked him."

"An' I come to you from Kansas, wavin' the tail o' friendship to all an' sundry, an' in the name of the uncounted millions o' pure-minded, high-toned horses now strugglin' towards the light o' freedom, I say to you, Rub noses with us in our sacred an' holy cause. The power is yourn. Without you, I say, Man the Oppressor cannot move himself from place to place. Without you he cannot reap, he cannot sow, he cannot plough."

"Mighty odd place, Kansas!" said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus. "Seemin'ly they reap in

the spring an' plough in the fall. 'Guess it's right fer them, but 'twould make me kinder giddy."

"The produc's of your untirin' industry would rot on the ground if you did not weakly consent to help him. *Let* 'em rot, I say! Let him call you to the stables in vain an' nevermore! Let him shake his ensnarin' oats under your nose in vain! Let the Brahmas roost in the buggy, an' the rats run riot round the reaper! Let him walk on his two hind feet till they blame well drop off! Win no more soul-destroyin' races for his pleasure! Then, an' not till then, will Man the Oppressor know where he's at. Quit workin', fellow-sufferers an' slaves! Kick! Rear! Plunge! Lie down on the shafts, an' woller! Smash an' destroy! The conflict will be but short, an' the victory is certain. After that we can press our inalienable rights to eight quarts o' oats a day, two good blankets, an' a fly-net an' the best o' stablin'."

The yellow horse shut his yellow teeth with a triumphant snap; and Tuck said, with a sigh: "'Seems 's if somethin' ought to be done. Don't seem right, somehow,— oppressin' us an' all,— to my way o' thinkin'."

Said Muldoon, in a far-away and sleepy voice: "Who in Vermont's goin' to haul de inalienable oats? Dey weigh like Sam Hill, an' sixty bushel at dat allowance ain't goin' to last t'ree weeks here. An' dere's de winter hay for five mont's!"

"We can settle those minor details when the great cause is won," said the yellow horse. "Let us return simply but grandly to our inalienable rights — the right o' freedom on these yere verdant hills, an' no invijjus distinctions o' track an' pedigree."

"What in stables 'jer call an invijjus distinction?" said the Deacon, stiffly.

"Fer one thing, bein' a bloated, pampered trotter jest because you happen to be raised that way, an' couldn't no more help trottin' than eatin'."

"Do ye know anythin' about trotters?" said the Deacon.

"I've seen 'em trot. That was enough for me. *I* don't want to know any more. Trottin' 's immoral."

"Waal, I'll tell you this much. They don't bloat, an' they don't pamp — much. I don't hold out to be no trotter myself, though I am free to say I had hopes that way — onct. But I *do* say, fer I've seen 'em trained, that a trotter don't trot with his feet: he trots with his head; an' he does more work — ef you know what *that* is — in a week than you er your sire ever done in all your lives. He's everlastingly at it, a trotter is; an' when he isn't, he's studyin' haow. You seen 'em trot? Much you hev! You was hitched to a rail, back o' the stand, in a buckboard with a

soap-box nailed on the slats, an' a frowzy buff'lo atop, while your man peddled rum fer lemonade to little boys as thought they was actin' manly, till you was both run off the track an' jailed — you intoed, shufflin', sway-backed, wind-suckin' skate, you!"

"Don't get het up, Deacon," said Tweezy, quietly. "Now, suh, would you consider a fox-trot, an' single-foot, an' rack, an' pace, *an'* amble, distinctions not worth distinguishin'? I assuah you, gentlemen, there was a time befo' I was afflicted in my hip, if you'll pardon me, Miss Tuck, when I was quite celebrated in Paduky for *all* those gaits; an' in my opinion the Deacon's co'rect when he says that a ho'se of any position in society gets his gaits by his haid, an' not by — his, ah, limbs, Miss Tuck. I reckon I'm very little good now, but I'm rememberin' the things I used to do befo' I took to transpo'tin' real estate with the help an' assistance of this gentleman here." He looked at Muldoon.

"Invijjus arterficial hind legs!" said the ex-car-horse, with a grunt of contempt. "On de Belt Line we don't reckon no horse wuth his keep 'less he kin switch de car off de track, run her round on de cobbles, an' dump her in ag'in ahead o' de truck what's blockin' him. Dere is a way o' swingin' yer quarters when de driver says, 'Yank her out, boys!' dat takes a year to learn. Onct

yer git onter it, youse kin yank a cable-car outer a manhole. I don't advertise myself for no circus-horse, but I knew dat trick better than most, an' dey was good to me in de stables, fer I saved time on de Belt — an' time's what dey hunt in N' York."

"But the simple child o' nature—" the yellow horse began.

"Oh, go an' unscrew yer splints! You're talkin' through yer bandages," said Muldoon, with a horse-laugh. "Dere ain't no loose-box for de simple child o' nature on de Belt Line, wid de *Paris* comin' in an' de *Teutonic* goin' out, an' de trucks an' de coupés sayin' things, an' de heavy freight movin' down fer de Boston boat 'bout t'ree o'clock of an August afternoon, in de middle of a hot wave when de fat Kanucks an' Western horses drops dead on de block. De simple child o' nature had better chase himself inter de water. Every man at de end of his lines is mad or loaded or silly, an' de cop's madder an' loadeder an' sillier than de rest. Dey all take it outer de horses. Dere's no wavin' brooks ner ripplin' grass on de Belt Line. Run her out on de cobbles wid de sparks flyin', an' stop when de cop slugs you on de bone o' yer nose. Dat's N' York; see?"

"I was always told s'ciety in Noo York was dreffle refined an' high-toned," said Tuck. "We're lookin' to go there one o' these days, Nip an' me."

"Oh, *you* won't see no Belt business where

you'll go, miss. De man dat wants you 'll want you bad, an' he'll summer you on Long Island er at Newport, wid a winky-pinky silver harness an' an English coachman. You'll make a star-hitch, you an' yer brother, miss. But I guess you won't have no nice smooth bar bit. Dey checks 'em, an' dey bangs deir tails, an' dey bits 'em, de city folk, an' dey says it's English, ye know, an' dey darsen't cut a horse loose 'ca'se o' de cops. N' York's no place fer a horse, 'less he's on de Belt, an' can go round wid de boys. Wisht *I* was in de Fire Department!"

"But did you never stop to consider the degradin' servitood of it all?" said the yellow horse.

"You don't stop on de Belt, cully. You're stopped. An' we was all in de servitood business, man an' horse, an' Jimmy dat sold de papers. Guess de passengers weren't out to grass neither, by de way dey acted. I done my turn, an' I'm none o' Barnum's crowd; but any horse dat's worked on de Belt four years don't train wid no simple child o' nature — not by de whole length o' N' York."

"But can it be possible that with your experience, and at your time of life, you do not believe that all horses are free and equal?" said the yellow horse.

"Not till they're dead," Muldoon answered quietly. "An' den it depends on de gross total

o' buttons an' mucilage dey gits outer youse at Barren Island."

"They tell me you're a prominent philosopher." The yellow horse turned to Marcus. "Can *you* deny a basic and pivotal statement such as this?"

"I don't deny anythin'," said Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, cautiously; "but ef you *ast* me, I should say 'twuz more different sorts o' clipped oats of a lie than anythin' I've had my teeth into sence I wuz foaled."

"Are you a horse?" said the yellow horse.

"Them that knows me best 'low I am."

"Ain't *I* a horse?"

"Yep; one kind of."

"Then ain't you an' me equal?"

"How fer kin you go in a day to a loaded buggy, drawin' five hundred pounds?" Marcus asked carelessly.

"That has nothing to do with the case," the yellow horse answered excitedly.

"There's nothing I know hez more to do with the case," Marcus replied.

"Kin ye yank a full car outer de tracks ten times in de mornin'?" said Muldoon.

"Kin ye go to Keene — forty-two mile in an afternoon — with a mate," said Rick, "an' turn out bright an' early next mornin'?"

"Was there evah any time in your careah, suh — I am not referrin' to the present circum-

stances, but our mutual glorious past — when you could carry a pretty girl to market hahnsome, an' let her knit all the way on account o' the smoothness o' the motion?" said Tweezy.

"Kin you keep your feet through the West River Bridge, with the narrer-gage comin' in on one side, an' the Montreal flyer the other, an' the old bridge teeterin' between?" said the Deacon. "Kin you put your nose down on the cow-catcher of a locomotive when you're waitin' at the depot an' let 'em play 'Curfew shall not ring to-night' with the big brass bell?"

"Kin you hold back when the brichin' breaks? Kin you stop fer orders when your nigh hind leg's over your trace an' ye feel good of a frosty mornin'?" said Nip, who had only learned that trick last winter, and thought it was the crown of horsely knowledge.

"What's the use o' talkin'?" said Tedda Gabler, scornfully. "What kin ye do?"

"I rely on my simple rights — the inalienable rights o' my unfettered horsehood. An' I am proud to say I have never, since my first shoes, lowered myself to obeyin' the will o' man."

"'Must ha' had a heap o' whips broke over yer yaller back," said Tedda. "Hev ye found it paid any?"

"Sorrer has been my portion since the day I was foaled. Blows an' boots an' whips an' in-

sults — injury, outrage, an' oppression. I would not endoor the degradin' badges o' servitood that connect us with the buggy an' the farm-wagon."

"It's amazin' difficult to draw a buggy 'thout traces er collar er breast-strap er somefin'," said Marcus. "A Power-machine for sawin' wood is 'most the only thing there's no straps to. I've helped saw 's much as three cord in an afternoon in a Power-machine. Slep', too, most o' the time, I did; but 'tain't half as inter*es*tin' ez goin' daown-taown in the Concord."

"Concord don't hender *you* goin' to sleep any," said Nip. "My throat-lash! D' you remember when you lay down in the sharves last week, waitin' at the piazza?"

"Pshaw! That didn't hurt the sharves. They wuz good an' wide, an' I lay down keerful. The folks kep' me hitched up nigh an hour 'fore they started; an' larfed — why, they all but lay down themselves with larfin'. Say, Boney, if you've got to be hitched *to* anything that goes on wheels, you've got to be hitched *with* somefin'."

"Go an' jine a circus," said Muldoon, "an' walk on your hind legs. All de horses dat knows too much to work [he pronounced it "woik," New York fashion] jine de circus."

"I am not sayin' anythin' again' work," said the yellow horse; "work is the finest thing in the world."

"'Seems too fine fer some of us," Tedda snorted.

"I only ask that each horse should work for himself, an' enjoy the profit of his labours. Let him work intelligently, an' not as a machine."

"There ain't no horse that works like a machine," Marcus began.

"There's no way o' workin' that doesn't mean goin' to pole er single — they never put me in the Power-machine — er under saddle," said Rick.

"Oh, shucks! We're talkin' same ez we graze," said Nip, "raound an' raound in circles. Rod, we hain't heard from you yet, an' you've more know-how than any span here."

Rod, the off-horse of the pair, had been standing with one hip lifted, like a tired cow; and you could only tell by the quick flutter of the haw across his eye, from time to time, that he was paying any attention to the argument. He thrust his jaw out sidewise, as his habit is when he pulls, and changed his leg. His voice was hard and heavy, and his ears were close to his big, plain Hambletonian head.

"How old are you?" he said to the yellow horse.

"Nigh thirteen, I guess."

"Mean age; ugly age; I'm gettin' that way myself. How long hev ye been pawin' this fire-fanged stable-litter?"

"If you mean my principles, I've held 'em sence I was three."

"Mean age; ugly age; teeth give heaps o' trouble then. 'Set a colt to actin' crazy fer a while. *You've* kep' it up, seemin'ly. D'ye talk much to your neighbours fer a steady thing?"

"I uphold the principles o' the Cause wherever I am pastured."

"'Done a heap o' good, I guess?"

"I am proud to say I have taught a few of my companions the principles o' freedom an' liberty."

"Meanin' they ran away er kicked when they got the chanst?"

"I was talkin' in the abstrac', an' not in the concrete. My teachin's educated them."

"What a horse, specially a young horse, hears in the abstrac', he's liable to do in the Concord. You was handled late, I presoom."

"Four, risin' five."

"That's where the trouble began. Driv' by a woman, like ez not — eh?"

"Not fer long," said the yellow horse, with a snap of his teeth.

"Spilled her?"

"I heerd she never drove again."

"Any childern?"

"Buckboards full of 'em."

"Men too?"

"I have shed conside'ble men in my time."

"By kickin'?"

"Any way that come along. Fallin' back over the dash is as handy as most."

"They must be turr'ble afraid o' you daowntaown?"

"They've sent me here to get rid o' me. I guess they spend their time talkin' over my campaigns."

"*I* wanter know!"

"Yes, *sir*. Now, all you gentlemen have asked me what I can do. I'll just show you. See them two fellers lyin' down by the buggy?"

"Yep; one of 'em owns me. T'other broke me," said Rod.

"Get 'em out here in the open, an' I'll show you something. Lemme hide back o' you peoples, so 's they won't see what I'm at."

"Meanin' ter kill 'em?" Rod drawled. There was a shudder of horror through the others; but the yellow horse never noticed.

"I'll catch 'em by the back o' the neck, an' pile-drive 'em a piece. They can suit 'emselves about livin' when I'm through with 'em."

"'Shouldn't wonder ef they did," said Rod.

The yellow horse had hidden himself very cleverly behind the others as they stood in a group, and was swaying his head close to the ground with a curious scythe-like motion, looking sidewise out of his wicked eyes. You can never

mistake a man-eater getting ready to knock a man down. We had had one to pasture the year before.

"See that?" said my companion, turning over on the pine-needles. "Nice for a woman walking 'cross lots, wouldn't it be?"

"Bring 'em out!" said the yellow horse, hunching his sharp back. "There's no chance among them tall trees. Bring out the — oh! Ouch!"

It was a right-and-left kick from Muldoon. I had no idea that the old car-horse could lift so quickly. Both blows caught the yellow horse full and fair in the ribs, and knocked the breath out of him.

"What's that for?" he said angrily, when he recovered himself; but I noticed he did not draw any nearer to Muldoon than was necessary.

Muldoon never answered, but discoursed to himself in the whining grunt that he uses when he is going down-hill in front of a heavy load. We call it singing; but I think it's something much worse, really. The yellow horse blustered and squealed a little, and at last said that, if it was a horse-fly that had stung Muldoon, he would accept an apology.

"You'll get it," said Muldoon, "in de sweet by-and-bye — all de apology you've any use for. Excuse me interruptin' you, Mr. Rod, but I'm like Tweezy — I've a Southern drawback in me hind legs."

"Naow, I want you all here to take notice, an' you'll learn something," Rod went on. "This yaller-backed skate comes to our pastur'— "

"Not havin' paid his board," put in Tedda.

"Not havin' earned his board, an' talks smooth to us abaout ripplin' brooks an' wavin' grass, an' his high-toned, pure-souled horsehood, which don't hender him sheddin' women an' childern, an' fallin' over the dash onter men. You heard his talk, an' you thought it mighty fine, some o' you."

Tuck looked guilty here, but she did not say anything.

"Bit by bit he goes on ez you have heard."

"I was talkin' in the abstrac'," said the yellow horse, in an altered voice.

"Abstrac' be switched! Ez I've said, it's this yer blamed abstrac' business that makes the young uns cut up in the Concord; an' abstrac' or no abstrac', he crep' on an' on till he come to killin' plain an' straight — killin' them as never done him no harm, jest beca'se they owned horses."

"An' knowed how to manage 'em," said Tedda. "That makes it worse."

"Waal, he didn't kill 'em, anyway," said Marcus. "He'd ha' been half killed ef he had tried."

"'Makes no differ," Rod answered. "He meant to; an' ef he hadn't — s'pose we want the Back Pasture turned into a biffin'-ground on our only day er rest? 'S'pose *we* want *our* men

walkin' round with bits er lead pipe an' a twitch, an' their hands full o' stones to throw at us, same 's if we wuz hogs er hooky keows? More'n that, leavin' out Tedda here — an' I guess it's more her maouth than her manners stands in her light — there ain't a horse on this farm that ain't a woman's horse, an' proud of it. An' this yer bog-spavined Kansas sunflower goes up an' daown the length o' the country, traded off an' traded on, boastin' as he's shed women — an' childern. I don't say as a woman in a buggy ain't a fool. I don't say as she ain't the lastin'est kind er fool, ner I don't say a child ain't worse — spattin' the lines an' standin' up an' hollerin' — but I *do* say, 'tain't none of our business to shed 'em daown the road."

"We don't," said the Deacon. "The baby tried to git some o' my tail for a sooveneer last fall when I was up to the haouse, an' I didn't kick. Boney's talk ain't goin' to hurt us any. We ain't colts."

"Thet's what you *think*. Bimeby you git into a tight corner, 'Lection day er Valley Fair, like 's not, daown-taown, when you're all het an' lathery, an' pestered with flies, an' thirsty, an' sick o' bein' worked in an' aout 'tween buggies. *Then* somethin' whispers inside o' your winkers, bringin' up all that talk abaout servitood an' inalienable truck an' sech like, an' jest then a Militia gun goes off, er your wheels hit, an' — waal, you're only another

horse ez can't be trusted. I've been there time an' again. Boys — fer I've seen you all bought er broke — on my solemn repitation fer a three-minute clip, I ain't givin' you no bran-mash o' my own fixin'. I'm tellin' you my experiences, an' I've had ez heavy a load an' ez high a check 's any horse here. I wuz born with a splint on my near fore ez big 's a walnut, an' the cussed, three-cornered Hambletonian temper that sours up an' curdles daown ez you git older. I've favoured my splint; even little Rick he don't know what it's cost me to keep my end up sometimes; an' I've fit my temper in stall an' harness, hitched up an' at pasture, till the sweat trickled off my hooves, an' they thought I wuz off condition, an' drenched me."

"When my affliction came," said Tweezy, gently, "I was very near to losin' my manners. Allow me to extend to you my sympathy, suh."

Rick said nothing, but he looked at Rod curiously. Rick is a sunny-tempered child who never bears malice, and I don't think he quite understood. He gets his temper from his mother, as a horse should.

"I've been there too, Rod," said Tedda. "Open confession's good for the soul, an' all Monroe County knows I've had my experriences."

"But if you will excuse me, suh, that pusson"— Tweezy looked unspeakable things at the yellow

horse — "that pusson who has insulted our intelligences comes from Kansas. An' what a ho'se of his position, an' Kansas at that, says cannot, by any stretch of the halter, concern gentlemen of *our* position. There's no shadow of equal'ty, suh, not even for one kick. He's beneath our contempt."

"Let him talk," said Marcus. "It's always inter*es*tin' to know what another horse thinks. It don't tech us."

"An' he talks so, too," said Tuck. "I've never heard anythin' so smart for a long time."

Again Rod stuck out his jaws sidewise, and went on slowly, as though he were slugging on a plain bit at the end of a thirty-mile drive:

"I want all you here ter understand thet ther ain't no Kansas, ner no Kentucky, ner yet no Vermont, in *our* business. There's jest two kind o' horse in the United States — them ez can an' will do their work after bein' properly broke an' handled, an' them as won't. I'm sick an' tired o' this everlastin' tail-switchin' an' wickerin' abaout one State er another. A horse kin be proud o' his State, an' swap lies abaout it in stall or when he's hitched to a block, ef he keers to put in fly-time that way; but he hain't no right to let that pride o' hisn interfere with his work, ner to make it an excuse fer claimin' he's different. That's colts' talk, an' don't you fergit it, Tweezy. An',

Marcus, you remember that bein' a philosopher, an' anxious to save trouble,— fer you *are*,— don't excuse you from jumpin' with all your feet on a slack-jawed, crazy clay-bank like Boney here. It's leavin' 'em alone that gives 'em their chance to ruin colts an' kill folks. An', Tuck, waal, you're a mare anyways — but when a horse comes along an' covers up all his talk o' killin' with ripplin' brooks, an' wavin' grass, an' eight quarts of oats a day free, *after* killin' his man, don't you be run away with by his yap. You're too young an' too nervous."

"I'll — I'll have nervous prostration sure ef there's a fight here," said Tuck, who saw what was in Rod's eye; "I'm — I'm that sympathetic I'd run away clear to next caounty."

"Yep; I know that kind o' sympathy. Jest lasts long enough to start a fuss, an' then lights aout to make new trouble. I hain't been ten years in harness fer nuthin'. Naow, we're goin' to keep school with Boney fer a spell."

"Say, look a-here, you ain't goin' to hurt me, are you? Remember, I belong to a man in town," cried the yellow horse, uneasily. Muldoon kept behind him so that he could not run away.

"I know it. There must be some pore delooded fool in this State hez a right to the loose end o' your hitchin'-strap. I'm blame sorry fer him, but he shall hev his rights when we're through with you," said Rod.

"If it's all the same, gentlemen, I'd ruther change pasture. 'Guess I'll do it now."

"'Can't always have your 'druthers. 'Guess you won't," said Rod.

"But look a-here. All of you ain't so blame unfriendly to a stranger. S'pose we count noses."

"What in Vermont fer?" said Rod, putting up his eyebrows. The idea of settling a question by counting noses is the very last thing that ever enters the head of a well-broken horse.

"To see how many's on my side. Here's Miss Tuck, anyway; an' Colonel Tweezy yonder's neutral; an' Judge Marcus, an' I guess the Reverend [the yellow horse meant the Deacon] might see that I had my rights. He's the likeliest-lookin' trotter I've ever set eyes on. Pshaw, boys! You ain't goin' to pound *me*, be you? Why, we've gone round in pasture, all colts together, this month o' Sundays, hain't we, as friendly as could be. There ain't a horse alive — I don't care who he is — has a higher opinion o' you, Mr. Rod, than I have. Let's do it fair an' true an' above the exe. Let's count noses same 's they do in Kansas." Here he dropped his voice a little and turned to Marcus: "Say, Judge, there's some green food I know, back o' the brook, no one hain't touched yet. After this little *fracas* is fixed up, you an' me'll make up a party an' 'tend to it."

Marcus did not answer for a long time, then he

said: "There's a pup up to the haouse 'bout eight weeks old. He'll yap till he gits a lickin', an' when he sees it comin' he lies on his back, an' yowls. But he don't go through no cir*kit*uous nose-countin' first. I've seen a noo light sence Rod spoke. You'll better stand up to what's served. I'm goin' to philosophise all over your carcass."

"*I'm* goin' to do yer up in brown paper," said Muldoon. "I can fit you on apologies."

"Hold on. Ef we all biffed you now, these same men you've been so dead anxious to kill 'u'd call us off. 'Guess we'll wait till they go back to the haouse, an' you'll have time to think cool an' quiet," said Rod.

"Have you no respec' whatever fer the dignity o' our common horsehood?" the yellow horse squealed.

"Nary respec' onless the horse kin do something. America's paved with the kind er horse you are — jist plain yaller-dog horse — waitin' ter be whipped inter shape. We call 'em yearlings an' colts when they're young. When they're aged we pound 'em — in this pastur'. Horse, sonny, is what you start from. We know all about horse here, an' he ain't any high-toned, pure-souled child o' nature. Horse, plain horse, same ez you, is chock-full o' tricks, an' meannesses, an' cussednesses, an' shirkin's, an' monkey-shines, which he's took over from his sire an' his dam,

an' thickened up with his own special fancy in the way o' goin' crooked. Thet's *horse*, an' thet's about his dignity an' the size of his soul 'fore he's been broke an' rawhided a piece. Now we ain't goin' to give ornery unswitched *horse*, that hain't done nawthin' wuth a quart of oats sence he wuz foaled, pet names that would be good enough fer Nancy Hanks, or Alix, or Directum, who *her*. Don't you try to back off acrost them rocks. Wait where you are! Ef I let my Hambletonian temper git the better o' me I'd frazzle you out finer than rye-straw inside o' three minutes, you woman-scarin', kid-killin', dash-breakin', unbroke, unshod, ungaited, pastur'-hoggin', saw-backed, shark-mouthed, hair-trunk-thrown-in-in-trade son of a bronco an' a sewin'-machine!"

"I think we'd better get home," I said to my companion, when Rod had finished; and we climbed into the coupé, Tedda whinnying, as we bumped over the ledges: "Well, I'm dreffle sorry I can't stay fer the sociable; but I hope an' trust my friends'll take a ticket fer me."

"Bet your natchul!" said Muldoon, cheerfully, and the horses scattered before us, trotting into the ravine.

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Next morning we sent back to the livery-stable what was left of the yellow horse. It seemed tired, but anxious to go.

THE SHIP THAT FOUND HERSELF

THE SHIP THAT FOUND HERSELF

It was her first voyage, and though she was but a cargo-steamer of twenty-five hundred tons, she was the very best of her kind, the outcome of forty years of experiments and improvements in framework and machinery; and her designers and owner thought as much of her as though she had been the *Lucania*. Any one can make a floating hotel that will pay expenses, if he puts enough money into the saloon, and charges for private baths, suites of rooms, and such like; but in these days of competition and low freights every square inch of a cargo-boat must be built for cheapness, great hold-capacity, and a certain steady speed. This boat was, perhaps, two hundred and forty feet long and thirty-two feet wide, with arrangements that enabled her to carry cattle on her main and sheep on her upper deck if she wanted to; but her great glory was the amount of cargo that she could store away in her holds. Her owners — they were a very well known Scotch firm — came round with her from the north, where she had been launched and christened and fitted, to Liverpool,

where she was to take cargo for New York; and the owner's daughter, Miss Frazier, went to and fro on the clean decks, admiring the new paint and the brass work, and the patent winches, and particularly the strong, straight bow, over which she had cracked a bottle of champagne when she named the steamer the *Dimbula*. It was a beautiful September afternoon, and the boat in all her newness — she was painted lead-colour with a red funnel — looked very fine indeed. Her house-flag was flying, and her whistle from time to time acknowledged the salutes of friendly boats, who saw that she was new to the High and Narrow Seas and wished to make her welcome.

"And now," said Miss Frazier, delightedly, to the captain, "she's a real ship, isn't she? It seems only the other day father gave the order for her, and now — and now — isn't she a beauty!" The girl was proud of the firm, and talked as though she were the controlling partner.

"Oh, she's no so bad," the skipper replied cautiously. "But I'm sayin' that it takes more than christenin' to mak' a ship. In the nature o' things, Miss Frazier, if ye follow me, she's just irons and rivets and plates put into the form of a ship. She has to find herself yet."

"I thought father said she was exceptionally well found."

"So she is," said the skipper, with a laugh.

"But it's this way wi' ships, Miss Frazier. She's all here, but the parrts of her have not learned to work together yet. They've had no chance."

"The engines are working beautifully. I can hear them."

"Yes, indeed. But there's more than engines to a ship. Every inch of her, ye'll understand, has to be livened up and made to work wi' its neighbour — sweetenin' her, we call it, technically."

"And how will you do it?" the girl asked.

"We can no more than drive and steer her and so forth; but if we have rough weather this trip — it's likely — she'll learn the rest by heart! For a ship, ye'll obsairve, Miss Frazier, is in no sense a reegid body closed at both ends. She's a highly complex structure o' various an' conflictin' strains, wi' tissues that must give an' tak' accordin' to her personal modulus of elasteecity." Mr. Buchanan, the chief engineer, was coming towards them. "I'm sayin' to Miss Frazier, here, that our little *Dimbula* has to be sweetened yet, and nothin' but a gale will do it. How's all wi' your engines, Buck?"

"Well enough — true by plumb an' rule, o' course; but there's no spontaneeity yet." He turned to the girl. "Take my word, Miss Frazier, and maybe ye'll comprehend later; even after a pretty girl's christened a ship it does not follow

that there's such a thing as a ship under the men that work her."

"I was sayin' the very same, Mr. Buchanan," the skipper interrupted.

"That's more metaphysical than I can follow," said Miss Frazier, laughing.

"Why so? Ye're good Scotch, an'— I knew your mother's father, he was fra' Dumfries — ye've a vested right in metapheesics, Miss Frazier, just as ye have in the *Dimbula*," the engineer said.

"Eh, well, we must go down to the deep watters, an' earn Miss Frazier her deevidends. Will you not come to my cabin for tea?" said the skipper. "We'll be in dock the night, and when you're goin' back to Glasgie ye can think of us loadin' her down an' drivin' her forth — all for your sake."

In the next few days they stowed some four thousand tons dead-weight into the *Dimbula*, and took her out from Liverpool. As soon as she met the lift of the open water, she naturally began to talk. If you lay your ear to the side of the cabin, the next time you are in a steamer, you will hear hundreds of little voices in every direction, thrilling and buzzing, and whispering and popping, and gurgling and sobbing and squeaking exactly like a telephone in a thunder-storm. Wooden ships shriek and growl and grunt, but iron vessels throb and quiver through all their hundreds of

ribs and thousands of rivets. The *Dimbula* was very strongly built, and every piece of her had a letter or a number, or both, to describe it; and every piece had been hammered, or forged, or rolled, or punched by man, and had lived in the roar and rattle of the shipyard for months. Therefore, every piece had its own separate voice, in exact proportion to the amount of trouble spent upon it. Cast-iron, as a rule, says very little; but mild steel plates and wrought-iron, and ribs and beams that have been much bent and welded and riveted, talk continuously. Their conversation, of course, is not half as wise as our human talk, because they are all, though they do not know it, bound down one to the other in a black darkness, where they cannot tell what is happening near them, nor what will overtake them next.

As soon as she had cleared the Irish coast, a sullen, grey-headed old wave of the Atlantic climbed leisurely over her straight bows, and sat down on the steam-capstan used for hauling up the anchor. Now the capstan and the engine that drove it had been newly painted red and green; besides which, nobody likes being ducked.

"Don't you do that again," the capstan sputtered through the teeth of his cogs. "Hi! Where's the fellow gone?"

The wave had slouched overside with a plop and a chuckle; but "Plenty more where he came

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from," said a brother-wave, and went through and over the capstan, who was bolted firmly to an iron plate on the iron deck-beams below.

"Can't you keep still up there?" said the deck-beams. "What's the matter with you? One minute you weigh twice as much as you ought to, and the next you don't!"

"It isn't my fault," said the capstan. "There's a green brute outside that comes and hits me on the head."

"Tell that to the shipwrights. You've been in position for months and you've never wriggled like this before. If you aren't careful you'll strain *us*."

"Talking of strain," said a low, rasping, unpleasant voice, "are any of you fellows — you deck-beams, we mean — aware that those exceedingly ugly knees of yours happen to be riveted into our structure — *ours?*"

"Who might you be?" the deck-beams inquired.

"Oh, nobody in particular," was the answer. "We're only the port and starboard upper-deck stringers; and if you persist in heaving and hiking like this, we shall be reluctantly compelled to take steps."

Now the stringers of the ship are long iron girders, so to speak, that run lengthways from stern to bow. They keep the iron frames (what

are called ribs in a wooden ship) in place, and also help to hold the ends of the deck-beams, which go from side to side of the ship. Stringers always consider themselves most important, because they are so long.

"You will take steps — will you?" This was a long echoing rumble. It came from the frames — scores and scores of them, each one about eighteen inches distant from the next, and each riveted to the stringers in four places. "We think you will have a certain amount of trouble in *that*"; and thousands and thousands of the little rivets that held everything together whispered: "You will! You will! Stop quivering and be quiet. Hold on, brethren! Hold on! Hot Punches! What's that?"

Rivets have no teeth, so they cannot chatter with fright; but they did their best as a fluttering jar swept along the ship from stern to bow, and she shook like a rat in a terrier's mouth.

An unusually severe pitch, for the sea was rising, had lifted the big throbbing screw nearly to the surface, and it was spinning round in a kind of soda-water — half sea and half air — going much faster than was proper, because there was no deep water for it to work in. As it sank again, the engines — and they were triple expansion, three cylinders in a row — snorted through all their three pistons. "Was that a joke, you

fellow outside? It's an uncommonly poor one. How are we to do our work if you fly off the handle that way?"

"I didn't fly off the handle," said the screw, twirling huskily at the end of the screw-shaft. "If I had, you'd have been scrap-iron by this time. The sea dropped away from under me, and I had nothing to catch on to. That's all."

"That's all, d'you call it?" said the thrust-block, whose business it is to take the push of the screw; for if a screw had nothing to hold it back it would crawl right into the engine-room. (It is the holding back of the screwing action that gives the drive to a ship.) "I know I do my work deep down and out of sight, but I warn you I expect justice. All I ask for is bare justice. Why can't you push steadily and evenly, instead of whizzing like a whirligig, and making me hot under all my collars?" The thrust-block had six collars, each faced with brass, and he did not wish to get them heated.

All the bearings that supported the fifty feet of screw-shaft as it ran to the stern whispered: "Justice — give us justice."

"I can only give you what I can get," the screw answered. "Look out! It's coming again!"

He rose with a roar as the *Dimbula* plunged, and "whack — flack — whack — whack" went

the engines, furiously, for they had little to check them.

"I'm the noblest outcome of human ingenuity — Mr. Buchanan says so," squealed the high-pressure cylinder. "This is simply ridiculous!" The piston went up savagely, and choked, for half the steam behind it was mixed with dirty water. "Help! Oiler! Fitter! Stoker! Help! I'm choking," it gasped. "Never in the history of maritime invention has such a calamity overtaken one so young and strong. And if I go, who's to drive the ship?"

"Hush! oh, hush!" whispered the Steam, who, of course, had been to sea many times before. He used to spend his leisure ashore in a cloud, or a gutter, or a flower-pot, or a thunder-storm, or anywhere else where water was needed. "That's only a little priming, a little carrying-over, as they call it. It'll happen all night, on and off. I don't say it's nice, but it's the best we can do under the circumstances."

"What difference can circumstances make? I'm here to do my work — on clean, dry steam. Blow circumstances!" the cylinder roared.

"The circumstances will attend to the blowing. I've worked on the North Atlantic run a good many times — it's going to be rough before morning."

"It isn't distressingly calm now," said the extra-

strong frames — they were called web-frames — in the engine-room. "There's an upward thrust that we don't understand, and there's a twist that is very bad for our brackets and diamond-plates, and there's a sort of west-northwesterly pull, that follows the twist, which seriously annoys us. We mention this because we happened to cost a good deal of money, and we feel sure that the owner would not approve of our being treated in this frivolous way."

"I'm afraid the matter is out of owner's hands for the present," said the Steam, slipping into the condenser. "You're left to your own devices till the weather betters."

"I wouldn't mind the weather," said a flat bass voice below; "it's this confounded cargo that's breaking my heart. I'm the garboard-strake, and I'm twice as thick as most of the others, and I ought to know something."

The garboard-strake is the lowest plate in the bottom of a ship, and the *Dimbula's* garboard-strake was nearly three-quarters of an inch mild steel.

"The sea pushes me up in a way I should never have expected," the strake grunted, "and the cargo pushes me down, and, between the two, I don't know what I'm supposed to do."

"When in doubt, hold on," rumbled the Steam, making head in the boilers.

"Yes; but there's only dark, and cold, and hurry, down here; and how do I know whether the other plates are doing their duty? Those bulwark-plates up above, I've heard, ain't more than five-sixteenths of an inch thick—scandalous, I call it."

"I agree with you," said a huge web-frame, by the main cargo-hatch. He was deeper and thicker than all the others, and curved half-way across the ship in the shape of half an arch, to support the deck where deck-beams would have been in the way of cargo coming up and down. "I work entirely unsupported, and I observe that I am the sole strength of this vessel, so far as my vision extends. The responsibility, I assure you, is enormous. I believe the money-value of the cargo is over one hundred and fifty thousand pounds. Think of that!"

"And every pound of it is dependent on my personal exertions." Here spoke a sea-valve that communicated directly with the water outside, and was seated not very far from the garboard-strake. "I rejoice to think that I am a Prince-Hyde Valve, with best Pará rubber facings. Five patents cover me — I mention this without pride — five separate and several patents, each one finer than the other. At present I am screwed fast. Should I open, you would immediately be swamped. This is incontrovertible!"

Patent things always use the longest words they can. It is a trick that they pick up from their inventors.

"That's news," said a big centrifugal bilge-pump. "I had an idea that you were employed to clean decks and things with. At least, I've used you for that more than once. I forget the precise number, in thousands, of gallons which I am guaranteed to throw per hour; but I assure you, my complaining friends, that there is not the least danger. I alone am capable of clearing any water that may find its way here. By my Biggest Deliveries, we pitched then!"

The sea was getting up in workmanlike style. It was a dead westerly gale, blown from under a ragged opening of green sky, narrowed on all sides by fat, grey clouds; and the wind bit like pincers as it fretted the spray into lacework on the flanks of the waves.

"I tell you what it is," the foremast telephoned down its wire-stays. "I'm up here, and I can take a dispassionate view of things. There's an organised conspiracy against us. I'm sure of it, because every single one of these waves is heading directly for our bows. The whole sea is concerned in it — and so's the wind. It's awful!"

"What's awful?" said a wave, drowning the capstan for the hundredth time.

"This organised conspiracy on your part," the capstan gurgled, taking his cue from the mast.

"Organised bubbles and spindrift! There has been a depression in the Gulf of Mexico. Excuse me!" He leaped overside; but his friends took up the tale one after another.

"Which has advanced—" That wave hove green water over the funnel.

"As far as Cape Hatteras—" He drenched the bridge.

"And is now going out to sea—to sea—to sea!" The third went out in three surges, making a clean sweep of a boat, which turned bottom up and sank in the darkening troughs alongside, while the broken falls whipped the davits.

"That's all there is to it," seethed the white water roaring through the scuppers. "There's no animus in our proceedings. We're only meteorological corollaries."

"Is it going to get any worse?" said the bow-anchor chained down to the deck, where he could only breathe once in five minutes.

"'Not knowing, can't say. Wind may blow a bit by midnight. Thanks awfully. Good-bye."

The wave that spoke so politely had travelled some distance aft, and found itself all mixed up on the deck amidships, which was a well-deck sunk between high bulwarks. One of the bulwark-plates, which was hung on hinges to open outward,

had swung out, and passed the bulk of the water back to the sea again with a clean smack.

"Evidently that's what I'm made for," said the plate, closing again with a sputter of pride. "Oh, no, you don't, my friend!"

The top of a wave was trying to get in from the outside, but as the plate did not open in that direction, the defeated water spurted back.

"Not bad for five-sixteenths of an inch," said the bulwark-plate. "My work, I see, is laid down for the night"; and it began opening and shutting, as it was designed to do, with the motion of the ship.

"We are not what you might call idle," groaned all the frames together, as the *Dimbula* climbed a big wave, lay on her side at the top, and shot into the next hollow, twisting in the descent. A huge swell pushed up exactly under her middle, and her bow and stern hung free with nothing to support them. Then one joking wave caught her up at the bow, and another at the stern, while the rest of the water slunk away from under her just to see how she would like it; so she was held up at her two ends only, and the weight of the cargo and the machinery fell on the groaning iron keels and bilge-stringers.

"Ease off! Ease off, there!" roared the garboard-strake. "I want one-eighth of an inch fair play. D' you hear me, you rivets!"

"Ease off! Ease off!" cried the bilge-stringers. "Don't hold us so tight to the frames!"

"Ease off!" grunted the deck-beams, as the *Dimbula* rolled fearfully. "You've cramped our knees into the stringers, and we can't move. Ease off, you flat-headed little nuisances."

Then two converging seas hit the bows, one on each side, and fell away in torrents of streaming thunder.

"Ease off!" shouted the forward collision-bulkhead. "I want to crumple up, but I'm stiffened in every direction. Ease off, you dirty little forge-filings. Let me breathe!"

All the hundreds of plates that are riveted to the frames, and make the outside skin of every steamer, echoed the call, for each plate wanted to shift and creep a little, and each plate, according to its position, complained against the rivets.

"We can't help it! *We* can't help it!" they murmured in reply. "We're put here to hold you, and we're going to do it; you never pull us twice in the same direction. If you'd say what you were going to do next, we'd try to meet your views."

"As far as I could feel," said the upper-deck planking, and that was four inches thick, "every single iron near me was pushing or pulling in opposite directions. Now, what's the sense of that? My friends, let us all pull together."

"Pull any way you please," roared the funnel, "so long as you don't try your experiments on *me*. I need fourteen wire-ropes, all pulling in different directions, to hold me steady. Isn't that so?"

"We believe you, my boy!" whistled the funnel-stays through their clinched teeth, as they twanged in the wind from the top of the funnel to the deck.

"Nonsense! We must all pull together," the decks repeated. "Pull lengthways."

"Very good," said the stringers; "then stop pushing sideways when you get wet. Be content to run gracefully fore and aft, and curve in at the ends as we do."

"No — no curves at the end. A very slight workmanlike curve from side to side, with a good grip at each knee, and little pieces welded on," said the deck-beams.

"Fiddle!" cried the iron pillars of the deep, dark hold. "Who ever heard of curves? Stand up straight; be a perfectly round column, and carry tons of good solid weight — like that! There!" A big sea smashed on the deck above, and the pillars stiffened themselves to the load.

"Straight up and down is not bad," said the frames, who ran that way in the sides of the ship, "but you must also expand yourselves sideways. Expansion is the law of life, children. Open out! open out!"

"Come back!" said the deck-beams, savagely, as the upward heave of the sea made the frames try to open. "Come back to your bearings, you slack-jawed irons!"

"Rigidity! Rigidity! Rigidity!" thumped the engines. "Absolute, unvarying rigidity — rigidity!"

"You see!" whined the rivets, in chorus. "No two of you will ever pull alike, and — and you blame it all on us. We only know how to go through a plate and bite down on both sides so that it can't, and mustn't, and sha'n't move."

"I've got one fraction of an inch play, at any rate," said the garboard-strake, triumphantly. So he had, and all the bottom of the ship felt the easier for it.

"Then we're no good," sobbed the bottom rivets. "We were ordered — we were ordered — never to give; and we've given, and the sea will come in, and we'll all go to the bottom together! First we're blamed for everything unpleasant, and now we haven't the consolation of having done our work."

"Don't say I told you," whispered the Steam, consolingly; "but, between you and me and the last cloud I came from, it was bound to happen sooner or later. You *had* to give a fraction, and you've given without knowing it. Now, hold on, as before."

"What's the use?" a few hundred rivets chattered. "We've given — we've given; and the sooner we confess that we can't keep the ship together, and go off our little heads, the easier it will be. No rivet forged can stand this strain."

"No one rivet was ever meant to. Share it among you," the Steam answered.

"The others can have my share. I'm going to pull out," said a rivet in one of the forward plates.

"If you go, others will follow," hissed the Steam. "There's nothing so contagious in a boat as rivets going. Why, I knew a little chap like you — he was an eighth of an inch fatter, though — on a steamer — to be sure, she was only twelve hundred tons, now I come to think of it — in exactly the same place as you are. He pulled out in a bit of a bobble of a sea, not half as bad as this, and he started all his friends on the same butt-strap, and the plates opened like a furnace door, and I had to climb into the nearest fog-bank, while the boat went down."

"Now that's peculiarly disgraceful," said the rivet. "Fatter than me, was he, and in a steamer not half our tonnage? Reedy little peg! I blush for the family, sir." He settled himself more firmly than ever in his place, and the Steam chuckled.

"You see," he went on, quite gravely, "a rivet,

and especially a rivet in your position, is really the one indispensable part of the ship."

The Steam did not say that he had whispered the very same thing to every single piece of iron aboard. There is no sense in telling too much.

And all that while the little *Dimbula* pitched and chopped, and swung and slewed, and lay down as though she were going to die, and got up as though she had been stung, and threw her nose round and round in circles half a dozen times as she dipped, for the gale was at its worst. It was inky black, in spite of the tearing white froth on the waves, and, to top everything, the rain began to fall in sheets, so that you could not see your hand before your face. This did not make much difference to the ironwork below, but it troubled the foremast a good deal.

"Now it's all finished," he said dismally. "The conspiracy is too strong for us. There is nothing left but to—"

"*Hurraar! Brrrraaah! Brrrrrp!*" roared the Steam through the fog-horn, till the decks quivered. "Don't be frightened, below. It's only me, just throwing out a few words, in case any one happens to be rolling round to-night."

"You don't mean to say there's any one except *us* on the sea in such weather?" said the funnel, in a husky snuffle.

"Scores of 'em," said the Steam, clearing its

throat. "*Rrrrrraaa! Brraaaaa! Prrrrp!* It's a trifle windy up here; and, Great Boilers! how it rains!"

"We're drowning," said the scuppers. They had been doing nothing else all night, but this steady thrash of rain above them seemed to be the end of the world.

"That's all right. We'll be easier in an hour or two. First the wind and then the rain: Soon you may make sail again! *Grrraaaaaah! Drrrraaaa! Drrrp!* I have a notion that the sea is going down already. If it does you'll learn something about rolling. We've only pitched till now. By the way, aren't you chaps in the hold a little easier than you were?"

There was just as much groaning and straining as ever, but it was not so loud or squeaky in tone; and when the ship quivered she did not jar stiffly, like a poker hit on the floor, but gave with a supple little waggle, like a perfectly balanced golf-club.

"We have made a most amazing discovery," said the stringers, one after another. "A discovery that entirely changes the situation. We have found, for the first time in the history of shipbuilding, that the inward pull of the deck-beams and the outward thrust of the frames locks us, as it were, more closely in our places, and enables us to endure a strain which is entirely without parallel in the records of marine architecture."

The Steam turned a laugh quickly into a roar up the fog-horn. "What massive intellects you great stringers have," he said softly, when he had finished.

"We also," began the deck-beams, "are discoverers and geniuses. We are of opinion that the support of the hold-pillars materially helps us. We find that we lock up on them when we are subjected to a heavy and singular weight of sea above."

Here the *Dimbula* shot down a hollow, lying almost on her side; righting at the bottom with a wrench and a spasm.

"In these cases — are you aware of this, Steam? — the plating at the bows, and particularly at the stern — we would also mention the floors beneath us — help *us* to resist any tendency to spring." The frames spoke, in the solemn awed voice which people use when they have just come across something entirely new for the very first time.

"I'm only a poor puffy little flutterer," said the Steam, "but I have to stand a good deal of pressure in my business. It's all tremendously interesting. Tell us some more. You fellows are so strong."

"Watch us and you'll see," said the bow-plates, proudly. "Ready, behind there! Here's the father and mother of waves coming! Sit tight, rivets all!" A great sluicing comber thundered

by, but through the scuffle and confusion the Steam could hear the low, quick cries of the iron-work as the various strains took them — cries like these: "Easy, now — easy! *Now* push for all your strength! Hold out! Give a fraction! Hold up! Pull in! Shove crossways! Mind the strain at the ends! Grip, now! Bite tight! Let the water get away from under — and there she goes!"

The wave raced off into the darkness, shouting, "Not bad, that, if it's your first run!" and the drenched and ducked ship throbbed to the beat of the engines inside her. All three cylinders were white with the salt spray that had come down through the engine-room hatch; there was white fur on the canvas-bound steam-pipes, and even the bright-work deep below was speckled and soiled; but the cylinders had learned to make the most of steam that was half water, and were pounding along cheerfully.

"How's the noblest outcome of human ingenuity hitting it?" said the Steam, as he whirled through the engine-room.

"Nothing for nothing in this world of woe," the cylinders answered, as though they had been working for centuries, "and precious little for seventy-five pounds head. We've made two knots this last hour and a quarter! Rather humiliating for eight hundred horse-power, isn't it?"

"Well, it's better than drifting astern, at any rate. You seem rather less — how shall I put it? — stiff in the back than you were."

"If you'd been hammered as we've been this night, you wouldn't be stiff — iff — iff, either. Theoreti — retti — retti — cally, of course, rigidity is the thing. Purrr — purr — practically, there has to be a little give and take. *We* found that out by working on our sides for five minutes at a stretch — chch — chh. How's the weather?"

"'Sea's going down fast," said the Steam.

"Good business," said the high-pressure cylinder. "Whack her up, boys. They've given us five pounds more steam"; and he began humming the first bars of "Said the young Obadiah to the old Obadiah," which, as you may have noticed, is a pet tune among engines not built for high speed. Racing-liners with twin-screws sing "The Turkish Patrol" and the overture to the "Bronze Horse," and "Madame Angot," till something goes wrong, and then they render Gounod's "Funeral March of a Marionette," with variations.

"You'll learn a song of your own some fine day," said the Steam, as he flew up the fog-horn for one last bellow.

Next day the sky cleared and the sea dropped a little, and the *Dimbula* began to roll from side to side till every inch of iron in her was sick and

giddy. But luckily they did not all feel ill at the same time: otherwise she would have opened out like a wet paper box.

The Steam whistled warnings as he went about his business: it is in this short, quick roll and tumble that follows a heavy sea that most of the accidents happen, for then everything thinks that the worst is over and goes off guard. So he orated and chattered till the beams and frames and floors and stringers and things had learned how to lock down and lock up on one another, and endure this new kind of strain.

They found ample time to practise, for they were sixteen days at sea, and it was foul weather till within a hundred miles of New York. The *Dimbula* picked up her pilot, and came in covered with salt and red rust. Her funnel was dirty-grey from top to bottom; two boats had been carried away; three copper ventilators looked like hats after a fight with the police; the bridge had a dimple in the middle of it; the house that covered the steam steering-gear was split as with hatchets; there was a bill for small repairs in the engine-room almost as long as the screw-shaft; the forward cargo-hatch fell into bucket-staves when they raised the iron cross-bars; and the steam-capstan had been badly wrenched on its bed. Altogether, as the skipper said, it was "a pretty general average."

"But she's soupled," he said to Mr. Buchanan. "For all her dead-weight she rode like a yacht. Ye mind that last blow off the Banks? I am proud of her, Buck."

"It's vera good," said the chief engineer, looking along the dishevelled decks. "Now, a man judgin' superfeecially would say we were a wreck, but we know otherwise — by experience."

Naturally everything in the *Dimbula* fairly stiffened with pride, and the foremast and the forward collision-bulkhead, who are pushing creatures, begged the Steam to warn the Port of New York of their arrival. "Tell those big boats all about us," they said. "They seem to take us quite as a matter of course."

It was a glorious, clear, dead calm morning, and in single file, with less than half a mile between each, their bands playing and their tugboats shouting and waving handkerchiefs, were the *Majestic*, the *Paris*, the *Touraine*, the *Servia*, the *Kaiser Wilhelm II.*, and the *Werkendam*, all statelily going out to sea. As the *Dimbula* shifted her helm to give the great boats clear way, the Steam (who knows far too much to mind making an exhibition of himself now and then) shouted:

"Oyez! Oyez! Oyez! Princes, Dukes, and Barons of the High Seas! Know ye by these presents, we are the *Dimbula*, fifteen days nine hours from Liverpool, having crossed the Atlantic

with four thousand ton of cargo for the first time in our career! We have not foundered. We are here. *'Eer! 'Eer!* We are not disabled. But we have had a time wholly unparalleled in the annals of ship-building! Our decks were swept! We pitched; we rolled! We thought we were going to die! *Hi! Hi!* But we didn't. We wish to give notice that we have come to New York all the way across the Atlantic, through the worst weather in the world; and we are the *Dimbula!* We are — arr — ha — ha — ha-r-r-r!"

The beautiful line of boats swept by as steadily as the procession of the Seasons. The *Dimbula* heard the *Majestic* say, "Hmph!" and the *Paris* grunted, "How!" and the *Touraine* said, "Oui!" with a little coquettish flicker of steam; and the *Servia* said, "Haw!" and the *Kaiser* and the *Werkendam* said, "Hoch!" Dutch fashion — and that was absolutely all.

"I did my best," said the Steam, gravely, "but I don't think they were much impressed with us, somehow. Do you?"

"It's simply disgusting," said the bow-plates. "They might have seen what we've been through. There isn't a ship on the sea that has suffered as we have — is there, now?"

"Well, I wouldn't go so far as that," said the Steam, "because I've worked on some of those boats, and sent them through weather quite as

bad as the fortnight that we've had, in six days; and some of them are a little over ten thousand tons, I believe. Now I've seen the *Majestic*, for instance, ducked from her bows to her funnel; and I've helped the *Arizona*, I think she was, to back off an iceberg she met with one dark night; and I had to run out of the *Paris's* engine-room, one day, because there was thirty foot of water in it. Of course, I don't deny —" The Steam shut off suddenly, as a tugboat, loaded with a political club and a brass band, that had been to see a New York Senator off to Europe, crossed their bows, going to Hoboken. There was a long silence that reached, without a break, from the cut-water to the propeller-blades of the *Dimbula*.

Then a new, big voice said slowly and thickly, as though the owner had just waked up: "It's my conviction that I have made a fool of myself."

The Steam knew what had happened at once; for when a ship finds herself all the talking of the separate pieces ceases and melts into one voice, which is the soul of the ship.

"Who are you?" he said, with a laugh.

"I am the *Dimbula*, of course. I've never been anything else except that — and a fool!"

The tugboat, which was doing its very best to be run down, got away just in time; its band playing clashily and brassily a popular but impolite air:

In the days of old Rameses — are you on ?
In the days of old Rameses — are you on ?
In the days of old Rameses,
That story had paresis,
Are you on — are you on — are you on ?

"Well, I'm glad you've found yourself," said the Steam. "To tell the truth, I was a little tired of talking to all those ribs and stringers. Here's Quarantine. After that we'll go to our wharf and clean up a little, and — next month we'll do it all over again."

THE TOMB OF HIS ANCESTORS

THE TOMB OF HIS ANCESTORS

Some people will tell you that if there were but a single loaf of bread in all India it would be divided equally between the Plowdens, the Trevors, the Beadons, and the Rivett-Carnacs. That is only one way of saying that certain families serve India generation after generation, as dolphins follow in line across the open sea.

Let us take a small and obscure case. There has been at least one representative of the Devonshire Chinns in or near Central India since the days of Lieutenant-Fireworker Humphrey Chinn, of the Bombay European Regiment, who assisted at the capture of Seringapatam in 1799. Alfred Ellis Chinn, Humphrey's younger brother, commanded a regiment of Bombay grenadiers from 1804 to 1813, when he saw some mixed fighting; and in 1834 John Chinn of the same family — we will call him John Chinn the First — came to light as a level-headed administrator in time of trouble at a place called Mundesur. He died young, but left his mark on the new country, and the Honourable the Board of Directors of the Honourable

the East India Company embodied his virtues in a stately resolution, and paid for the expenses of his tomb among the Satpura hills.

He was succeeded by his son, Lionel Chinn, who left the little old Devonshire home just in time to be severely wounded in the Mutiny. He spent his working life within a hundred and fifty miles of John Chinn's grave, and rose to the command of a regiment of small, wild hill-men, most of whom had known his father. His son John was born in the small thatched-roofed, mud-walled cantonment, which is even to-day eighty miles from the nearest railway, in the heart of a scrubby, tigerish country. Colonel Lionel Chinn served thirty years and retired. In the Canal his steamer passed the outward-bound troop-ship, carrying his son eastward to the family duty.

The Chinns are luckier than most folk, because they know exactly what they must do. A clever Chinn passes for the Bombay Civil Service, and gets away to Central India, where everybody is glad to see him. A dull Chinn enters the Police Department or the Woods and Forest, and sooner or later he, too, appears in Central India, and that is what gave rise to the saying, "Central India is inhabited by Bhils, Mairs, and Chinns, all very much alike." The breed is small-boned, dark, and silent, and the stupidest of them are good shots. John Chinn the Second was rather clever,

but as the eldest son he entered the army, according to Chinn tradition. His duty was to abide in his father's regiment for the term of his natural life, though the corps was one which most men would have paid heavily to avoid. They were irregulars, small, dark, and blackish, clothed in rifle-green with black-leather trimmings; and friends called them the "Wuddars," which means a race of low-caste people who dig up rats to eat. But the Wuddars did not resent it. They were the only Wuddars, and their points of pride were these:

Firstly, they had fewer English officers than any native regiment. Secondly, their subalterns were not mounted on parade, as is the general rule, but walked at the head of their men. A man who can hold his own with the Wuddars at their quickstep must be sound in wind and limb. Thirdly, they were the most *pukka shikarries* (out-and-out hunters) in all India. Fourthly—up to one-hundredthly—they were the Wuddars—Chinn's Irregular Bhil Levies of the old days, but now, henceforward and for ever, the Wuddars.

No Englishman entered their mess except for love or through family usage. The officers talked to their soldiers in a tongue not two hundred white folk in India understood; and the men were their children, all drawn from the Bhils, who are, perhaps, the strangest of the many strange

races in India. They were, and at heart are, wild men, furtive, shy, full of untold superstitions. The races whom we call natives of the country found the Bhil in possession of the land when they first broke into that part of the world thousands of years ago. The books call them Pre-Aryan, Aboriginal, Dravidian, and so forth; and, in other words, that is what the Bhils call themselves. When a Rajput chief whose bards can sing his pedigree backwards for twelve hundred years is set on the throne, his investiture is not complete till he has been marked on the forehead with blood from the veins of a Bhil. The Rajputs say the ceremony has no meaning, but the Bhil knows that it is the last, last shadow of his old rights as the long-ago owner of the soil.

Centuries of oppression and massacre made the Bhil a cruel and half-crazy thief and cattle-stealer, and when the English came he seemed to be almost as open to civilisation as the tigers of his own jungles. But John Chinn the First, father of Lionel, grandfather of our John, went into his country, lived with him, learned his language, shot the deer that stole his poor crops, and won his confidence, so that some Bhils learned to plough and sow, while others were coaxed into the Company's service to police their friends.

When they understood that standing in line did not mean instant execution, they accepted

soldiering as a cumbrous but amusing kind of sport, and were zealous to keep the wild Bhils under control. That was the thin edge of the wedge. John Chinn the First gave them written promises that, if they were good from a certain date, the Government would overlook previous offences; and since John Chinn was never known to break his word—he promised once to hang a Bhil locally esteemed invulnerable, and hanged him in front of his tribe for seven proved murders—the Bhils settled down as steadily as they knew how. It was slow, unseen work, of the sort that is being done all over India to-day; and though John Chinn's only reward came, as I have said, in the shape of a grave at Government expense, the little people of the hills never forgot him.

Colonel Lionel Chinn knew and loved them, too, and they were very fairly civilised, for Bhils, before his service ended. Many of them could hardly be distinguished from low-caste Hindoo farmers; but in the south, where John Chinn the First was buried, the wildest still clung to the Satpura ranges, cherishing a legend that some day Jan Chinn, as they called him, would return to his own. In the mean time they mistrusted the white man and his ways. The least excitement would stampede them, plundering, at random, and now and then killing; but if they were

handled discreetly they grieved like children, and promised never to do it again.

The Bhils of the regiment — the uniformed men — were virtuous in many ways, but they needed humouring. They felt bored and homesick unless taken after tiger as beaters; and their cold-blooded daring — all Wuddars shoot tigers on foot: it is their caste-mark — made even the officers wonder. They would follow up a wounded tiger as unconcernedly as though it were a sparrow with a broken wing; and this through a country full of caves and rifts and pits, where a wild beast could hold a dozen men at his mercy. Now and then some little man was brought to barracks with his head smashed in or his ribs torn away: but his companions never learned caution; they contented themselves with settling the tiger.

Young John Chinn was decanted at the verandah of the Wuddars' lonely mess-house from the back seat of a two-wheeled cart, his gun-cases cascading all round him. The slender little, hookey-nosed boy looked forlorn as a strayed goat when he slapped the white dust off his knees, and the cart jolted down the glaring road. But in his heart he was contented. After all, this was the place where he had been born, and things were not much changed since he had been sent to England, a child, fifteen years ago.

There were a few new buildings, but the air

and the smell and the sunshine were the same; and the little green men who crossed the parade-ground looked very familiar. Three weeks ago John Chinn would have said he did not remember a word of the Bhil tongue, but at the mess door he found his lips moving in sentences that he did not understand — bits of old nursery rhymes, and tail-ends of such orders as his father used to give the men.

The Colonel watched him come up the steps, and laughed.

"Look!" he said to the Major. "No need to ask the young un's breed. He's a *pukka* Chinn. 'Might be his father in the Fifties over again."

"'Hope he'll shoot as straight," said the Major. "He's brought enough ironmongery with him."

"'Wouldn't be a Chinn if he didn't. Watch him blowin' his nose. 'Regular Chinn beak. 'Flourishes his handkerchief like his father. It's the second edition — line for line."

"'Fairy tale, by Jove!" said the Major, peering through the slats of the jalousies. "If he's the lawful heir, he'll . . . Now old Chinn could no more pass that chick without fiddling with it than . . ."

"His son!" said the Colonel, jumping up.

"Well, I be blowed!" said the Major. The boy's eye had been caught by a split-reed screen that hung on a slew between the verandah pillars,

and, mechanically, he had tweaked the edge to set it level. Old Chinn had sworn three times a day at that screen for many years; he could never get it to his satisfaction. His son entered the anteroom in the middle of a fivefold silence. They made him welcome for his father's sake and, as they took stock of him, for his own. He was ridiculously like the portrait of the Colonel on the wall, and when he had washed a little of the dust from his throat he went to his quarters with the old man's short, noiseless jungle-step.

"So much for heredity," said the Major. "That comes of four generations among the Bhils."

"And the men know it," said a Wing officer. "They've been waiting for this youth with their tongues hanging out. I am persuaded that, unless he absolutely beats 'em over the head, they'll lie down by companies and worship him."

"Nothin' like havin' a father before you," said the Major. "I'm a parvenu with my chaps. I've only been twenty years in the regiment, and my revered parent he was a simple squire. There's no getting at the bottom of a Bhil's mind. Now, *why* is the superior bearer that young Chinn brought with him fleeing across country with his bundle?" He stepped into the verandah, and shouted after the man — a typical new-joined subaltern's servant who speaks English and cheats in proportion.

"What is it?" he called.

"Plenty bad man here. I going, sar," was the reply. "'Have taken Sahib's keys, and say will shoot."

"Doocid lucid — doocid convincin'. How those up-country thieves can leg it! He has been badly frightened by some one." The Major strolled to his quarters to dress for mess.

Young Chinn, walking like a man in a dream, had fetched a compass round the entire cantonment before going to his own tiny cottage. The captain's quarters, in which he had been born, delayed him for a little; then he looked at the well on the parade-ground, where he had sat of evenings with his nurse, and at the ten-by-fourteen church, where the officers went to service if a chaplain of any official creed happened to come along. It seemed very small as compared with the gigantic buildings he used to stare up at, but it was the same place.

From time to time he passed a knot of silent soldiers, who saluted. They might have been the very men who had carried him on their backs when he was in his first knickerbockers. A faint light burned in his room, and, as he entered, hands clasped his feet, and a voice murmured from the floor.

"Who is it?" said young Chinn, not knowing he spoke in the Bhil tongue.

"I bore you in my arms, Sahib, when I was a strong man and you were a small one — crying, crying, crying! I am your servant, as I was your father's before you. We are all your servants."

Young Chinn could not trust himself to reply, and the voice went on:

"I have taken your keys from that fat foreigner, and sent him away; and the studs are in the shirt for mess. Who should know, if I do not know? And so the baby has become a man, and forgets his nurse; but my nephew shall make a good servant, or I will beat him twice a day."

Then there rose up, with a rattle, as straight as a Bhil arrow, a little white-haired wizened ape of a man, with medals and orders on his tunic, stammering, saluting, and trembling. Behind him a young and wiry Bhil, in uniform, was taking the trees out of Chinn's mess-boots.

Chinn's eyes were full of tears. The old man held out his keys.

"Foreigners are bad people. He will never come back again. We are all servants of your father's son. Has the Sahib forgotten who took him to see the trapped tiger in the village across the river, when his mother was so frightened and he was so brave?"

The scene came back to Chinn in great magic-lantern flashes. "Bukta!" he cried; and all in a

breath: "You promised nothing should hurt me. *Is* it Bukta?"

The man was at his feet a second time. "He has not forgotten. He remembers his own people as his father remembered. Now can I die. But first I will live and show the Sahib how to kill tigers. That *that* yonder is my nephew. If he is not a good servant, beat him and send him to me, and I will surely kill him, for now the Sahib is with his own people. Ai, Jan *baba* — Jan *baba!* My Jan *baba!* I will stay here and see that this does his work well. Take off his boots, fool. Sit down upon the bed, Sahib, and let me look. It *is* Jan *baba*."

He pushed forward the hilt of his sword as a sign of service, which is an honour paid only to viceroys, governors, generals, or to little children whom one loves dearly. Chinn touched the hilt mechanically with three fingers, muttering he knew not what. It happened to be the old answer of his childhood, when Bukta in jest called him the little General Sahib.

The Major's quarters were opposite Chinn's, and when he heard his servant gasp with surprise he looked across the room. Then the Major sat on the bed and whistled; for the spectacle of the senior native commissioned officer of the regiment, an "unmixed" Bhil, a Companion of the Order of British India, with thirty-five years' spotless ser-

vice in the army, and a rank among his own people superior to that of many Bengal princelings, valeting the last-joined subaltern, was a little too much for his nerves.

The throaty bugles blew the Mess-call that has a long legend behind it. First a few piercing notes like the shrieks of beaters in a far-away cover, and next, large, full, and smooth, the refrain of the wild song: "And oh, and oh, the green pulse of Mundore — Mundore!"

"All little children were in bed when the Sahib heard that call last," said Bukta, passing Chinn a clean handkerchief. The call brought back memories of his cot under the mosquito-netting, his mother's kiss, and the sound of footsteps growing fainter as he dropped asleep among his men. So he hooked the dark collar of his new mess-jacket, and went to dinner like a prince who has newly inherited his father's crown.

Old Bukta swaggered forth curling his whiskers. He knew his own value, and no money and no rank within the gift of the Government would have induced him to put studs in young officers' shirts, or to hand them clean ties. Yet, when he took off his uniform that night, and squatted among his fellows for a quiet smoke, he told them what he had done, and they said that he was entirely right. Thereat Bukta propounded a theory which to a white mind would have seemed raving

insanity; but the whispering, level-headed little men of war considered it from every point of view, and thought that there might be a great deal in it.

At mess under the oil-lamps the talk turned as usual to the unfailing subject of *shikar* — big game-shooting of every kind and under all sorts of conditions. Young Chinn opened his eyes when he understood that each one of his companions had shot several tigers in the Wuddar style — on foot, that is — making no more of the business than if the brute had been a dog.

"In nine cases out of ten," said the Major, "a tiger is almost as dangerous as a porcupine. But the tenth time you come home feet first."

That set all talking, and long before midnight Chinn's brain was in a whirl with stories of tigers — man-eaters and cattle-killers each pursuing his own business as methodically as clerks in an office; new tigers that had lately come into such-and-such a district; and old, friendly beasts of great cunning, known by nicknames in the mess — such as "Puggy," who was lazy, with huge paws, and "Mrs. Malaprop," who turned up when you never expected her, and made female noises. Then they spoke of Bhil superstitions, a wide and picturesque field, till young Chinn hinted that they must be pulling his leg.

"'Deed, we aren't," said a man on his left. "We know all about you. You're a Chinn and

all that, and you've a sort of vested right here; but if you don't believe what *we're* telling you, what will you do when old Bukta begins his stories? He knows about ghost-tigers, and tigers that go to a hell of their own; and tigers that walk on their hind feet; and your grandpapa's riding-tiger, as well. 'Odd he hasn't spoken of that yet."

"You know you've an ancestor buried down Satpura way, don't you?" said the Major, as Chinn smiled irresolutely.

"Of course I do," said Chinn, who had the chronicle of the Book of Chinn by heart. It lies in a worn old ledger on the Chinese lacquer table behind the piano in the Devonshire home, and the children are allowed to look at it on Sundays.

"Well, I wasn't sure. Your revered ancestor, my boy, according to the Bhils, has a tiger of his own — a saddle-tiger that he rides round the country whenever he feels inclined. *I* don't call it decent in an ex-Collector's ghost; but that is what the Southern Bhils believe. Even our men, who might be called moderately cool, don't care to beat that country if they hear that Jan Chinn is running about on his tiger. It is supposed to be a clouded animal — not stripy, but blotchy, like a tortoise-shell tom-cat. No end of a brute, it is, and a sure sign of war or pestilence or — or something. There's a nice family legend for you."

"What's the origin of it, d' you suppose?" said Chinn.

"Ask the Satpura Bhils. Old Jan Chinn was a mighty hunter before the Lord. Perhaps it was the tiger's revenge, or perhaps he's huntin' 'em still. You must go to his tomb one of these days and inquire. Bukta will probably attend to that. He was asking me before you came whether by any ill-luck you had already bagged your tiger. If not, he is going to enter you under his own wing. Of course, for you of all men it's imperative. You'll have a first-class time with Bukta."

The Major was not wrong. Bukta kept an anxious eye on young Chinn at drill, and it was noticeable that the first time the new officer lifted up his voice in an order the whole line quivered. Even the Colonel was taken aback, for it might have been Lionel Chinn returned from Devonshire with a new lease of life. Bukta had continued to develop his peculiar theory among his intimates, and it was accepted as a matter of faith in the lines, since every word and gesture on young Chinn's part so confirmed it.

The old man arranged early that his darling should wipe out the reproach of not having shot a tiger; but he was not content to take the first or any beast that happened to arrive. In his own villages he dispensed the high, low, and middle justice, and when his people—naked and fluttered

— came to him with word of a beast marked down, he bade them send spies to the kills and the watering-places, that he might be sure the quarry was such an one as suited the dignity of such a man.

Three or four times the reckless trackers returned, most truthfully saying that the beast was mangy, undersized — a tigress worn with nursing, or a broken-toothed old male — and Bukta would curb young Chinn's impatience.

At last, a noble animal was marked down — a ten-foot cattle-killer with a huge roll of loose skin along the belly, glossy-hided, full-frilled about the neck, whiskered, frisky, and young. He had slain a man in pure sport, they said.

"Let him be fed," quoth Bukta, and the villagers dutifully drove out a cow to amuse him, that he might lie up near by.

Princes and potentates have taken ship to India and spent great moneys for the mere glimpse of beasts one-half as fine as this of Bukta's.

"It is not good," said he to the Colonel, when he asked for shooting-leave, "that my Colonel's son who may be — that my Colonel's son should lose his maidenhead on any small jungle beast. That may come after. I have waited long for this which is a tiger. He has come in from the Mair country. In seven days we will return with the skin."

The mess gnashed their teeth enviously. Bukta, had he chosen, might have invited them all. But he went out alone with Chinn, two days in a shooting-cart and a day on foot, till they came to a rocky, glary valley with a pool of good water in it. It was a parching day, and the boy very naturally stripped and went in for a bathe, leaving Bukta by the clothes. A white skin shows far against brown jungle, and what Bukta beheld on Chinn's back and right shoulder dragged him forward step by step with staring eyeballs.

"I'd forgotten it isn't decent to strip before a man of his position," said Chinn, flouncing in the water. "How the little devil stares! What is it, Bukta?"

"The Mark!" was the whispered answer.

"It is nothing. You know how it is with my people!" Chinn was annoyed. The dull-red birth-mark on his shoulder, something like a conventionalised Tartar cloud, had slipped his memory or he would not have bathed. It occurred, so they said at home, in alternate generations, appearing, curiously enough, eight or nine years after birth, and, save that it was part of the Chinn inheritance, would not be considered pretty. He hurried ashore, dressed again, and went on till they met two or three Bhils, who promptly fell on their faces. "My people," grunted Bukta, not

condescending to notice them. "And so your people, Sahib. When I was a young man we were fewer, but not so weak. Now we are many, but poor stock. As may be remembered. How will you shoot him, Sahib? From a tree; from a shelter which my people shall build; by day or by night?"

"On foot and in the daytime," said young Chinn.

"That was your custom, as I have heard," said Bukta to himself. "I will get news of him. Then you and I will go to him. I will carry one gun. You have yours. There is no need of more. What tiger shall stand against *thee?*"

He was marked down by a little water-hole at the head of a ravine, full-gorged and half asleep in the May sunlight. He was walked up like a partridge, and he turned to do battle for his life. Bukta made no motion to raise his rifle, but kept his eyes on Chinn, who met the shattering roar of the charge with a single shot — it seemed to him hours as he sighted — which tore through the throat, smashing the backbone below the neck and between the shoulders. The brute couched, choked, and fell, and before Chinn knew well what had happened Bukta bade him stay still while he paced the distance between his feet and the ringing jaws.

"Fifteen," said Bukta. "Short paces. No

need for a second shot, Sahib. He bleeds cleanly where he lies, and we need not spoil the skin. I said there would be no need of these, but they came — in case."

Suddenly the sides of the ravine were crowned with the heads of Bukta's people — a force that could have blown the ribs out of the beast had Chinn's shot failed; but their guns were hidden, and they appeared as interested beaters, some five or six waiting the word to skin. Bukta watched the life fade from the wild eyes, lifted one hand, and turned on his heel.

"No need to show that *we* care," said he. "Now, after this, we can kill what we choose. Put out your hand, Sahib."

Chinn obeyed. It was entirely steady, and Bukta nodded. "That also was your custom. My men skin quickly. They will carry the skin to cantonments. Will the Sahib come to my poor village for the night and, perhaps, forget that I am his officer?"

"But those men — the beaters. They have worked hard, and perhaps —"

"Oh, if they skin clumsily, we will skin them. They are my people. In the lines I am one thing. Here I am another."

This was very true. When Bukta doffed uniform and reverted to the fragmentary dress of his own people, he left his civilisation of drill in the

next world. That night, after a little talk with his subjects, he devoted to an orgie; and a Bhil orgie is a thing not to be safely written about. Chinn, flushed with triumph, was in the thick of it, but the meaning of the mysteries was hidden. Wild folk came and pressed about his knees with offerings. He gave his flask to the elders of the village. They grew eloquent, and wreathed him about with flowers. Gifts and loans, not all seemly, were thrust upon him, and infernal music rolled and maddened round red fires, while singers sang songs of the ancient times, and danced peculiar dances. The aboriginal liquors are very potent, and Chinn was compelled to taste them often, but, unless the stuff had been drugged, how came he to fall asleep suddenly, and to waken late the next day — half a march from the village?

"The Sahib was very tired. A little before dawn he went to sleep," Bukta explained. "My people carried him here, and now it is time we should go back to cantonments."

The voice, smooth and deferential, the step, steady and silent, made it hard to believe that only a few hours before Bukta was yelling and capering with naked fellow-devils of the scrub.

"My people were very pleased to see the Sahib. They will never forget. When next the Sahib goes out recruiting, he will go to my people, and they will give him as many men as we need."

Chinn kept his own counsel, except as to the shooting of the tiger, and Bukta embroidered that tale with a shameless tongue. The skin was certainly one of the finest ever hung up in the mess, and the first of many. When Bukta could not accompany his boy on shooting-trips, he took care to put him in good hands, and Chinn learned more of the mind and desire of the wild Bhil in his marches and campings, by talks at twilight or at wayside pools, than an uninstructed man could have come at in a lifetime.

Presently his men in the regiment grew bold to speak of their relatives — mostly in trouble — and to lay cases of tribal custom before him. They would say, squatting in his verandah at twilight, after the easy, confidential style of the Wuddars, that such-and-such a bachelor had run away with such-and-such a wife at a far-off village. Now, how many cows would Chinn Sahib consider a just fine? Or, again, if written order came from the Government that a Bhil was to repair to a walled city of the plains to give evidence in a law-court, would it be wise to disregard that order? On the other hand, if it were obeyed, would the rash voyager return alive?

"But what have I to do with these things?" Chinn demanded of Bukta, impatiently. "I am a soldier. I do not know the law."

"Hoo! Law is for fools and white men. Give

them a large and loud order, and they will abide by it. Thou art their law."

"But wherefore?"

Every trace of expression left Bukta's countenance. The idea might have smitten him for the first time. "How can I say?" he replied. "Perhaps it is on account of the name. A Bhil does not love strange things. Give them orders, Sahib — two, three, four words at a time such as they can carry away in their heads. That is enough."

Chinn gave orders then, valiantly, not realising that a word spoken in haste before mess became the dread unappealable law of villages beyond the smoky hills — was, in truth, no less than the Law of Jan Chinn the First, who, so the whispered legend ran, had come back to earth, to oversee the third generation, in the body and bones of his grandson.

There could be no sort of doubt in this matter. All the Bhils knew that Jan Chinn reincarnated had honoured Bukta's village with his presence after slaying his first — in this life — tiger; that he had eaten and drunk with the people, as he was used; and — Bukta must have drugged Chinn's liquor very deeply — upon his back and right shoulder all men had seen the same angry red Flying Cloud that the high Gods had set on the flesh of Jan Chinn the First when first he

came to the Bhil. As concerned the foolish white world which has no eyes, he was a slim and young officer in the Wuddars; but his own people knew he was Jan Chinn, who had made the Bhil a man; and, believing, they hastened to carry his words, careful never to alter them on the way.

Because the savage and the child who plays lonely games have one horror of being laughed at or questioned, the little folk kept their convictions to themselves; and the Colonel, who thought he knew his regiment, never guessed that each one of the six hundred quick-footed, beady-eyed rank-and-file, to attention beside their rifles, believed serenely and unshakenly that the subaltern on the left flank of the line was a demi-god twice born — tutelary deity of their land and people. The Earth-gods themselves had stamped the incarnation, and who would dare to doubt the handiwork of the Earth-gods?

Chinn, being practical above all things, saw that his family name served him well in the lines and in camp. His men gave no trouble — one does not commit regimental offences with a god in the chair of justice — and he was sure of the best beaters in the district when he needed them. They believed that the protection of Jan Chinn the First cloaked them, and were bold in that belief beyond the utmost daring of excited Bhils.

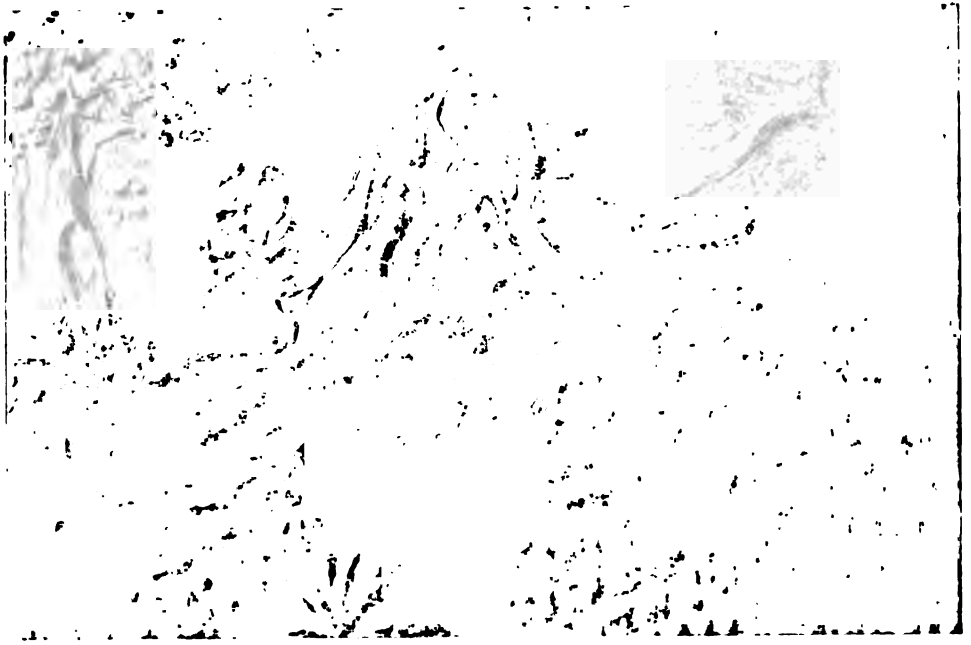
His quarters began to look like an amateur nat-

ural-history museum, in spite of duplicate heads and horns and skulls that he sent home to Devonshire. The people, very humanly, learned the weak side of their god. It is true he was unbribable, but bird-skins, butterflies, beetles, and, above all, news of big game pleased him. In other respects, too, he lived up to the Chinn tradition. He was fever-proof. A night's sitting out over a tethered goat in a damp valley, that would have filled the Major with a month's malaria, had no effect on him. He was, as they said, "salted before he was born."

Now in the autumn of his second year's service an uneasy rumour crept out of the earth and ran about among the Bhils. Chinn heard nothing of it till a brother-officer said across the mess-table: "Your revered ancestor's on the rampage in the Satpura country. You'd better look him up."

"I don't want to be disrespectful, but I'm a little sick of my revered ancestor. Bukta talks of nothing else. What's the old boy supposed to be doing now?"

"Riding cross-country by moonlight on his processional tiger. That's the story. He's been seen by about two thousand Bhils, skipping along the tops of the Satpuras, and scaring people to death. They believe it devoutly, and all the Satpura chaps are worshipping away at his shrine — tomb, I mean — like good uns. You really



THE TOMB OF HIS ANCESTORS

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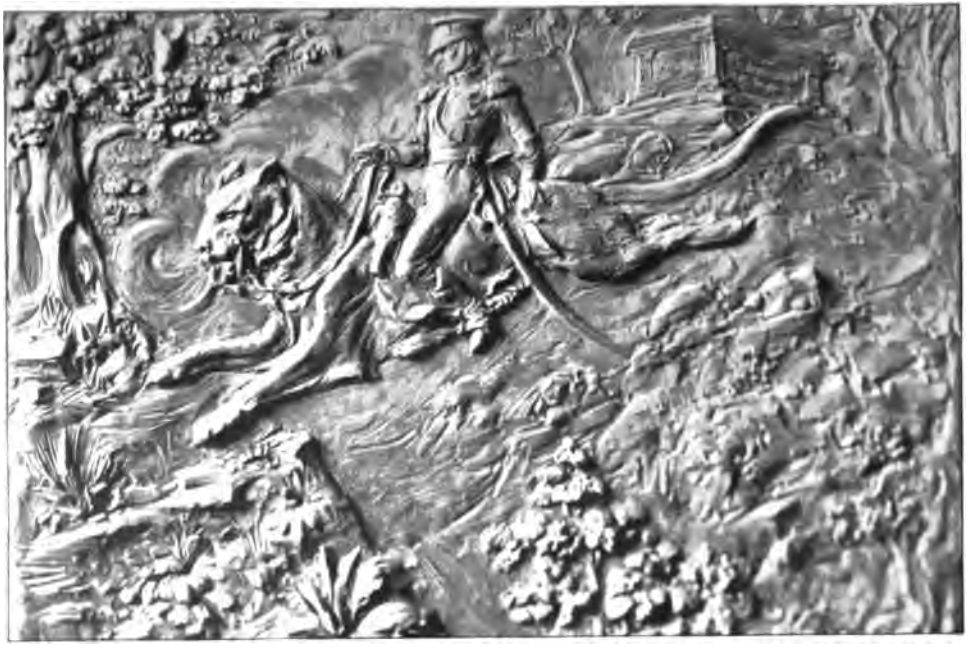

ought to go down there. Must be a queer thing to see your grandfather treated as a god."

"What makes you think there's any truth in the tale?" said Chinn.

"Because all our men deny it. They say they've never heard of Chinn's tiger. Now that's a manifest lie, because every Bhil *has*."

"There's only one thing you've overlooked," said the Colonel, thoughtfully. "When a local god reappears on earth, it's always an excuse for trouble of some kind; and those Satpura Bhils are about as wild as your grandfather left them, young un. It means something."

"Meanin' they may go on the war-path?" said Chinn.

"'Can't say — as yet. 'Shouldn't be surprised a little bit."

"I haven't been told a syllable."

"'Proves it all the more. They are keeping something back."

"Bukta tells me everything, too, as a rule. Now, why didn't he tell me that?"

Chinn put the question directly to the old man that night, and the answer surprised him.

"Why should I tell what is well known? Yes, the Clouded Tiger is out in the Satpura country."

"What do the wild Bhils think that it means?"

"They do not know. They wait. Sahib, what is coming? Say only one little word, and we will be content."

"We? What have tales from the south, where the jungly Bhils live, to do with drilled men?"

"When Jan Chinn wakes is no time for any Bhil to be quiet."

"But he has not waked, Bukta."

"Sahib" — the old man's eyes were full of tender reproof — "if he does not wish to be seen, why does he go abroad in the moonlight? We know he is awake, but we do not know what he desires. Is it a sign for all the Bhils, or one that concerns the Satpura folk alone? Say one little word, Sahib, that I may carry it to the lines, and send on to our villages. Why does Jan Chinn ride out? Who has done wrong? Is it pestilence? Is it murrain? Will our children die? Is it a sword? Remember, Sahib, we are thy people and thy servants, and in this life I bore thee in my arms — not knowing."

"Bukta has evidently looked on the cup this evening," Chinn thought; "but if I can do anything to soothe the old chap I must. It's like the Mutiny rumours on a small scale."

He dropped into a deep wicker chair, over which was thrown his first tiger-skin, and his weight on the cushion flapped the clawed paws

over his shoulders. He laid hold of them mechanically as he spoke, drawing the painted hide, cloak-fashion, about him.

"Now will I tell the truth, Bukta," he said, leaning forward, the dried muzzle on his shoulder, to invent a specious lie.

"I see that it is the truth," was the answer, in a shaking voice.

"Jan Chinn goes abroad among the Satpuras, riding on the Clouded Tiger, ye say? Be it so. Therefore the sign of the wonder is for the Satpura Bhils only, and does not touch the Bhils who plough in the north and east, the Bhils of the Khandesh, or any others, except the Satpura Bhils, who, as we know, are wild and foolish."

"It is, then, a sign for *them*. Good or bad?"

"Beyond doubt, good. For why should Jan Chinn make evil to those whom he has made men? The nights over yonder are hot; it is ill to lie in one bed over-long without turning, and Jan Chinn would look again upon his people. So he rises, whistles his Clouded Tiger, and goes abroad a little to breathe the çool air. If the Satpura Bhils kept to their villages, and did not wander after dark, they would not see him. Indeed, Bukta, it is no more than that he would see the light again in his own country. Send this news south, and say that it is my word."

Bukta bowed to the floor. "Good Heavens!"

thought Chinn, "and this blinking pagan is a first-class officer, and as straight as a die! I may as well round it off neatly." He went on:

"If the Satpura Bhils ask the meaning of the sign, tell them that Jan Chinn would see how they kept their old promises of good living. Perhaps they have plundered; perhaps they mean to disobey the orders of the Government; perhaps there is a dead man in the jungle; and so Jan Chinn has come to see."

"Is he, then, angry?"

"Bah! Am *I* ever angry with my Bhils? I say angry words, and threaten many things. *Thou* knowest, Bukta. I have seen thee smile behind the hand. I know, and thou knowest. The Bhils are my children. I have said it many times."

"Ay. We be thy children," said Bukta.

"And no otherwise is it with Jan Chinn, my father's father. He would see the land he loved and the people once again. It is a good ghost, Bukta. I say it. Go and tell them. And I do hope devoutly," he added, "that it will calm 'em down." Flinging back the tiger-skin, he rose with a long, unguarded yawn that showed his well-kept teeth.

Bukta fled, to be received in the lines by a knot of panting inquirers.

"It is true," said Bukta. "He wrapped him-

self in the skin, and spoke from it. He would see his own country again. The sign is not for us; and, indeed, he is a young man. How should he lie idle of nights? He says his bed is too hot and the air is bad. He goes to and fro for the love of night-running. He has said it."

The grey-whiskered assembly shuddered.

"He says the Bhils are his children. Ye know he does not lie. He has said it to me."

"But what of the Satpura Bhils? What means the sign for them?"

"Nothing. It is only night-running, as I have said. He rides to see if they obey the Government, as he taught them to do in his first life."

"And what if they do not?"

"He did not say."

The light went out in Chinn's quarters.

"Look," said Bukta. "Now he goes away. None the less it is a good ghost, as he has said. How shall we fear Jan Chinn, who made the Bhil a man? His protection is on us; and ye know Jan Chinn never broke a protection spoken or written on paper. When he is older and has found him a wife he will lie in his bed till morning."

A commanding officer is generally aware of the regimental state of mind a little before the men; and this is why the Colonel said, a few days later, that some one had been putting the Fear of God into the Wuddars. As he was the only person

officially entitled to do this, it distressed him to see such unanimous virtue. "It's too good to last," he said. "I only wish I could find out what the little chaps mean."

The explanation, as it seemed to him, came at the change of the moon, when he received orders to hold himself in readiness to "allay any possible excitement" among the Satpura Bhils, who were, to put it mildly, uneasy because a paternal Government had sent up against them a Mahratta State-educated vaccinator, with lancets, lymph, and an officially registered calf. In the language of State, they had "manifested a strong objection to all prophylactic measures," had "forcibly detained the vaccinator," and "were on the point of neglecting or evading their tribal obligations."

"That means they are in a blue funk — same as they were at census-time," said the Colonel; "and if we stampede them into the hills we'll never catch 'em, in the first place, and, in the second, they'll whoop off plundering till further orders. 'Wonder who the God-forsaken idiot is who is trying to vaccinate a Bhil. I knew trouble was coming. One good thing is that they'll only use local corps, and we can knock up something we'll call a campaign, and let them down easy. Fancy us potting our best beaters because they don't want to be vaccinated! They're only crazy with fear."

"Don't you think, sir," said Chinn, the next day, "that perhaps you could give me a fortnight's shooting-leave?"

"Desertion in the face of the enemy, by Jove!" The Colonel laughed. "I might, but I'd have to antedate it a little, because we're warned for service, as you might say. However, we'll assume that you applied for leave three days ago, and are now well on your way south."

"I'd like to take Bukta with me."

"Of course, yes. I think that will be the best plan. You've some kind of hereditary influence with the little chaps, and they may listen to you when a glimpse of our uniforms would drive them wild. You've never been in that part of the world before, have you? Take care they don't send you to your family vault in your youth and innocence. I believe you'll be all right if you can get 'em to listen to you."

"I think so, sir; but if — if they should accidentally put an — make asses of 'emselves — they might, you know — I hope you'll represent that they were only frightened. There isn't an ounce of real vice in 'em, and I should never forgive myself if any one of — of my name got them into trouble."

The Colonel nodded, but said nothing.

Chinn and Bukta departed at once. Bukta did not say that, ever since the official vaccinator had

been dragged into the hills by indignant Bhils, runner after runner had skulked up to the lines, entreating, with forehead in the dust, that Jan Chinn should come and explain this unknown horror that hung over his people.

The portent of the Clouded Tiger was now too clear. Let Jan Chinn comfort his own, for vain was the help of mortal man. Bukta toned down these beseechings to a simple request for Chinn's presence. Nothing would have pleased the old man better than a rough-and-tumble campaign against the Satpuras, whom he, as an "unmixed" Bhil, despised; but he had a duty to all his nation as Jan Chinn's interpreter; and he devoutly believed that forty plagues would fall on his village if he tampered with that obligation. Besides, Jan Chinn knew all things, and he rode the Clouded Tiger.

They covered thirty miles a day on foot and pony, raising the blue wall-like line of the Satpuras as swiftly as might be. Bukta was very silent.

They began the steep climb a little after noon, but it was near sunset ere they reached the stone platform clinging to the side of a rifted, jungle-covered hill, where Jan Chinn the First was laid, as he had desired, that he might overlook his people. All India is full of neglected graves that date from the beginning of the eighteenth century — tombs of forgotten colonels of corps long since

disbanded; mates of East Indiamen who went on shooting expeditions and never came back; factors, agents, writers, and ensigns of the Honourable the East India Company by hundreds and thousands and tens of thousands. English folk forget quickly, but natives have long memories, and if a man has done good in his life it is remembered after his death. The weathered marble four-square tomb of Jan Chinn was hung about with wild flowers and nuts, packets of wax and honey, bottles of native spirits, and infamous cigars, with buffalo horns and plumes of dried grass. At one end was a rude clay image of a white man, in the old-fashioned top-hat, riding on a bloated tiger.

Bukta salamed reverently as they approached. Chinn bared his head and began to pick out the blurred inscription. So far as he could read it ran thus — word for word, and letter for letter:

To the Memory of JOHN CHINN, ESQ.
Late Collector of . . . . . .
. . . . ithout Bloodshed or . . . error of Authority
Employ . only . . eans of Conciliat . . . and Confiden .
accomplished the . . . tire Subjection . . .
a Lawless and Predatory Peop . . .
. . . . taching them to . . . . ish Government
by a Conquest over . . . . Minds
The most perma . . . and rational Mode of Domini . .
. . . Governor General and Counc . . . engal
have ordered thi . . . . . erected
. . . arted this Life Aug. 19, 184 . . Ag . . .

On the other side of the grave were ancient verses, also very worn. As much as Chinn could decipher said:

. . . . the savage band
Forsook their Haunts and b . . . . is Command
. . . . mended . . rals check a . . . st for spoil
And . s . ing Hamlets prove his gene . . . . toil
Humanit . . . survey . . . . . ights restore . .
A Nation . . ield . . subdued without a Sword.

For some little time he leaned on the tomb thinking of this dead man of his own blood, and of the house in Devonshire; then, nodding to the plains: "Yes; it's a big work — all of it — even my little share. He must have been worth knowing. . . . Bukta, where are my people?"

"Not here, Sahib. No man comes here except in full sun. They wait above. Let us climb and see."

But Chinn, remembering the first law of Oriental diplomacy, in an even voice answered: "I have come this far only because the Satpura folk are foolish, and dared not visit our lines. Now bid them wait on me *here*. I am not a servant, but the master of Bhils."

"I go — I go," clucked the old man. Night was falling, and at any moment Jan Chinn might whistle up his dreaded steed from the darkening scrub.

Now for the first time in a long life Bukta dis-

obeyed a lawful command and deserted his leader; for he did not come back, but pressed to the flat table-top of the hill, and called softly. Men stirred all about him — little trembling men with bows and arrows who had watched the two since noon.

"Where is he?" whispered one.

"At his own place. He bids you come," said Bukta.

"Now?"

"Now."

"Rather let him loose the Clouded Tiger upon us. We do not go."

"Nor I, though I bore him in my arms when he was a child in this his life. Wait here till the day."

"But surely he will be angry."

"He will be very angry, for he has nothing to eat. But he has said to me many times that the Bhils are his children. By sunlight I believe this, but — by moonlight I am not so sure. What folly have ye Satpura pigs compassed that ye should need him at all?"

"One came to us in the name of the Government with little ghost-knives and a magic calf, meaning to turn us into cattle by the cutting off of our arms. We were greatly afraid, but we did not kill the man. He is here, bound — a black man; and we think he comes from the west. He said it was an order to cut us all with knives —

especially the women and the children. We did not hear that it was an order, so we were afraid, and kept to our hills. Some of our men have taken ponies and bullocks from the plains, and others pots and cloths and ear-rings."

"Are any slain?"

"By our men? Not yet. But the young men are blown to and fro by many rumours like flames upon a hill. I sent runners asking for Jan Chinn lest worse should come to us. It was this fear that he foretold by the sign of the Clouded Tiger."

"He says it is otherwise," said Bukta; and he repeated, with amplifications, all that young Chinn had told him at the conference of the wicker chair.

"Think you," said the questioner, at last, "that the Government will lay hands on us?"

"Not I," Bukta rejoined. "Jan Chinn will give an order, and ye will obey. The rest is between the Government and Jan Chinn. I myself know something of the ghost-knives and the scratching. It is a charm against the Small-pox. But how it is done I cannot tell. Nor need that concern you."

"If he stands by us and before the anger of the Government we will most strictly obey Jan Chinn, except — except we do not go down to that place to-night."

They could hear young Chinn below them

shouting for Bukta; but they cowered and sat still, expecting the Clouded Tiger. The tomb had been holy ground for nearly half a century. If Jan Chinn chose to sleep there, who had better right? But they would not come within eyeshot of the place till broad day.

At first Chinn was exceedingly angry, till it occurred to him that Bukta most probably had a reason (which, indeed, he had), and his own dignity might suffer if he yelled without answer. He propped himself against the foot of the grave, and, alternately dozing and smoking, came through the warm night proud that he was a lawful, legitimate, fever-proof Chinn.

He prepared his plan of action much as his grandfather would have done; and when Bukta appeared in the morning with a most liberal supply of food, said nothing of the overnight desertion. Bukta would have been relieved by an outburst of human anger; but Chinn finished his victual leisurely, and a cheroot, ere he made any sign.

"They are very much afraid," said Bukta, who was not too bold himself. "It remains only to give orders. They said they will obey if thou wilt only stand between them and the Government."

"That I know," said Chinn, strolling slowly to the table-land. A few of the elder men stood in

an irregular semicircle in an open glade; but the ruck of people — women and children —were hidden in the thicket. They had no desire to face the first anger of Jan Chinn the First.

Seating himself on a fragment of split rock, he smoked his cheroot to the butt, hearing men breathe hard all about him. Then he cried, so suddenly that they jumped:

"Bring the man that was bound!"

A scuffle and a cry were followed by the appearance of a Hindoo vaccinator, quaking with fear, bound hand and foot, as the Bhils of old were accustomed to bind their human sacrifices. He was pushed cautiously before the presence; but young Chinn did not look at him.

"I said — the man that *was* bound. Is it a jest to bring me one tied like a buffalo? Since when could the Bhil bind folk at his pleasure? Cut!"

Half a dozen hasty knives cut away the thongs, and the man crawled to Chinn, who pocketed his case of lancets and tubes of lymph. Then, sweeping the semicircle with one comprehensive forefinger, and in the voice of compliment, he said, clearly and distinctly: "Pigs!"

"Ai!" whispered Bukta. "Now he speaks. Woe to foolish people!"

"I have come on foot from my house" (the assembly shuddered) "to make clear a matter which any other than a Satpura Bhil would have seen

with both eyes from a distance. Ye know the Small-pox, who pits and scars your children so that they look like wasp-combs. It is an order of the Government that whoso is scratched on the arm with these little knives which I hold up is charmed against Her. All Sahibs are thus charmed, and very many Hindoos. This is the mark of the charm. Look!"

He rolled back his sleeve to the armpit and showed the white scars of the vaccination-mark on the white skin. "Come, all, and look."

A few daring spirits came up, and nodded their heads wisely. There was certainly a mark, and they knew well what other dread marks were hidden by the shirt. Merciful was Jan Chinn, that he had not then and there proclaimed his godhead!

"Now all these things the man whom ye bound told you."

"I did — a hundred times; but they answered with blows," groaned the operator, chafing his wrists and ankles.

"But, being pigs, ye did not believe; and so came I here to save you, first from Small-pox, next from a great folly of fear, and lastly, it may be, from the rope and the jail. It is no gain to me; it is no pleasure to me: but for the sake of that one who is yonder, who made the Bhil a man" — he pointed down the hill — "I, who am of his

blood, the son of his son, come to turn your people. And I speak the truth, as did Jan Chinn."

The crowd murmured reverently, and men stole out of the thicket by twos and threes to join it. There was no anger in their god's face.

"These are my orders. (Heaven send they'll take 'em, but I seem to have impressed 'em so far!) I myself will stay among you while this man scratches your arms with the knives, after the order of the Government. In three, or it may be five or seven, days, your arms will swell and itch and burn. That is the power of Small-pox fighting in your base blood against the orders of the Government. I will therefore stay among you till I see that Small-pox is conquered, and I will not go away till the men and the women and the little children show me upon their arms such marks as I have even now showed you. I bring with me two very good guns, and a man whose name is known among beasts and men. We will hunt together, I and he and your young men, and the others shall eat and lie still. This is my order."

There was a long pause while victory hung in the balance. A white-haired old sinner, standing on one uneasy leg, piped up:

"There are ponies and some few bullocks and other things for which we need a *kowl* [protection]. They were *not* taken in the way of trade."

The battle was won, and John Chinn drew a

breath of relief. The young Bhils had been raiding, but if taken swiftly all could be put straight.

"I will write a *kowl* so soon as the ponies, the bullocks, and the other things are counted before me and sent back whence they came. But first we will put the Government mark on such as have not been visited by Small-pox." In an undertone, to the vaccinator: "If you show you are afraid you'll never see Poona again, my friend."

"There is not sufficient ample supply of vaccine for all this population," said the man. "They have destroyed the offeecial calf."

"They won't know the difference. Scrape 'em all round, and give me a couple of lancets; I'll attend to the elders."

The aged diplomat who had demanded protection was the first victim. He fell to Chinn's hand, and dared not cry out. As soon as he was freed he dragged up a companion, and held him fast, and the crisis became, as it were, a child's sport; for the vaccinated chased the unvaccinated to treatment, vowing that all the tribe must suffer equally. The women shrieked, and the children ran howling; but Chinn laughed, and waved the pink-tipped lancet.

"It is an honour," he cried. "Tell them, Bukta, how great an honour it is that I myself should mark them. Nay, I cannot mark every

one — the Hindoo must also do his work — but I will touch all marks that he makes, so there will be an equal virtue in them. Thus do the Rajputs stick pigs. Ho, brother with one eye! Catch that girl and bring her to me. She need not run away yet, for she is not married, and I do not seek her in marriage. She will not come? Then she shall be shamed by her little brother, a fat boy, a bold boy. He puts out his arm like a soldier. Look! *He* does not flinch at the blood. Some day he shall be in my regiment. And now, mother of many, we will lightly touch thee, for Small-pox has been before us here. It is a true thing, indeed, that this charm breaks the power of Mata. There will be no more pitted faces among the Satpuras, and so ye can ask many cows for each maid to be wed."

And so on and so on — quick-poured showman's patter, sauced in the Bhil hunting-proverbs and tales of their own brand of coarse humour — till the lancets were blunted and both operators worn out.

But, nature being the same the world over, the unvaccinated grew jealous of their marked comrades, and came near to blows about it. Then Chinn declared himself a court of justice, no longer a medical board, and made formal inquiry into the late robberies.

"We are the thieves of Mahadeo," said the

Bhils, simply. "It is our fate, and we were frightened. When we are frightened we always steal."

Simply and directly as children, they gave in the tale of the plunder, all but two bullocks and some spirits that had gone amissing (these Chinn promised to make good out of his own pocket), and ten ringleaders were despatched to the lowlands with a wonderful document, written on the leaf of a note-book, and addressed to an Assistant District Superintendent of Police. There was warm calamity in that note, as Jan Chinn warned them, but anything was better than loss of liberty.

Armed with this protection, the repentant raiders went down-hill. They had no desire whatever to meet Mr. Dundas Fawne of the Police, aged twenty-two, and of a cheerful countenance, nor did they wish to revisit the scene of their robberies. Steering a middle course, they ran into the camp of the one Government chaplain allowed to the various irregular corps through a district of some fifteen thousand square miles, and stood before him in a cloud of dust. He was by way of being a priest, they knew, and, what was more to the point, a good sportsman who paid his beaters generously.

When he read Chinn's note he laughed, which they deemed a lucky omen, till he called up policemen, who tethered the ponies and the bullocks by the piled house-gear, and laid stern hands upon

three of that smiling band of the thieves of Mahadeo. The chaplain himself addressed them magisterially with a riding-whip. That was painful, but Jan Chinn had prophesied it. They submitted, but would not give up the written protection, fearing the jail. On their way back they met Mr. D. Fawne, who had heard about the robberies, and was not pleased.

"Certainly," said the eldest of the gang, when the second interview was at an end, "certainly Jan Chinn's protection has saved us our liberty, but it is as though there were many beatings in one small piece of paper. Put it away."

One climbed into a tree, and stuck the letter into a cleft forty feet from the ground, where it could do no harm. Warmed, sore, but happy, the ten returned to Jan Chinn next day, where he sat among uneasy Bhils, all looking at their right arms, and all bound under terror of their god's disfavour not to scratch.

"It was a good *kowl*," said the leader. "First the chaplain, who laughed, took away our plunder, and beat three of us, as was promised. Next, we meet Fawne Sahib, who frowned, and asked for the plunder. We spoke the truth, and so he beat us all, one after another, and called us chosen names. He then gave us these two bundles"—they set down a bottle of whisky and a box of cheroots—"and we came away. The *kowl* is left

in a tree, because its virtue is that so soon as we show it to a Sahib we are beaten."

"But for that *kowl*," said Jan Chinn, sternly, "ye would all have been marching to jail with a policeman on either side. Ye come now to serve as beaters for me. These people are unhappy, and we will go hunting till they are well. To-night we will make a feast."

It is written in the chronicles of the Satpura Bhils, together with many other matters not fit for print, that through five days, after the day that he had put his mark upon them, Jan Chinn the First hunted for his people; and on the five nights of those days the tribe was gloriously and entirely drunk. Jan Chinn bought country spirits of an awful strength, and slew wild pig and deer beyond counting, so that if any fell sick they might have two good reasons.

Between head- and stomach-aches they found no time to think of their arms, but followed Jan Chinn obediently through the jungles, and with each day's returning confidence men, women, and children stole away to their villages as the little army passed by. They carried news that it was good and right to be scratched with ghost-knives; that Jan Chinn was indeed reincarnated as a god of free food and drink, and that of all nations the Satpura Bhils stood first in his favour, if they would only refrain from scratching. Hencefor-

ward that kindly demi-god would be connected in their minds with great gorgings and the vaccine and lancets of a paternal Government.

"And to-morrow I go back to my home," said Jan Chinn to his faithful few, whom neither spirits, overeating, nor swollen glands could conquer. It is hard for children and savages to behave reverently at all times to the idols of their make-belief, and they had frolicked excessively with Jan Chinn. But the reference to his home cast a gloom on the people.

"And the Sahib will not come again?" said he who had been vaccinated first.

"That is to be seen," answered Chinn, warily.

"Nay, but come as a white man — come as a young man whom we know and love; for, as thou alone knowest, we are a weak people. If we again saw thy — thy horse —" They were picking up their courage.

"I have no horse. I came on foot — with Bukta, yonder. What is this?"

"Thou knowest — the thing that thou hast chosen for a night-horse." The little men squirmed in fear and awe.

"Night-horses? Bukta, what is this last tale of children?"

Bukta had been a silent leader in Chinn's presence since the night of his desertion, and was grateful for a chance-flung question.

"They know, Sahib," he whispered. "It is the Clouded Tiger. That that comes from the place where thou didst once sleep. It is thy horse — as it has been these three generations."

"My horse! That was a dream of the Bhils."

"It is no dream. Do dreams leave the tracks of broad pugs on earth? Why make two faces before thy people? They know of the night-ridings, and they — and they —"

"Are afraid, and would have them cease."

Bukta nodded. "If thou hast no further need of him. He is thy horse."

"The thing leaves a trail, then?" said Chinn.

"We have seen it. It is like a village road under the tomb."

"Can ye find and follow it for me?"

"By daylight — if one comes with us, and, above all, stands near by."

"I will stand close, and we will see to it that Jan Chinn does not ride any more."

The Bhils shouted the last words again and again.

From Chinn's point of view the stalk was nothing more than an ordinary one — down-hill, through split and crannied rocks, unsafe, perhaps, if a man did not keep his wits by him, but no worse than twenty others he had undertaken. Yet his men — they refused absolutely to beat, and would only trail — dripped sweat at every move.

They showed the marks of enormous pugs that ran, always down-hill, to a few hundred feet below Jan Chinn's tomb, and disappeared in a narrow-mouthed cave. It was an insolently open road, a domestic highway, beaten without thought of concealment.

"The beggar might be paying rent and taxes," Chinn muttered ere he asked whether his friend's taste ran to cattle or man.

"Cattle," was the answer. "Two heifers a week. We drive them for him at the foot of the hill. It is his custom. If we did not, he might seek us."

"Blackmail and piracy," said Chinn. "I can't say I fancy going into the cave after him. What's to be done?"

The Bhils fell back as Chinn lodged himself behind a rock with his rifle ready. Tigers, he knew, were shy beasts, but one who had been long cattle-fed in this sumptuous style might prove overbold.

"He speaks!" some one whispered from the rear. "He knows, too."

"Well, of *all* the infernal cheek!" said Chinn. There was an angry growl from the cave — a direct challenge.

"Come out, then," Chinn shouted. "Come out of that. Let's have a look at you."

The brute knew well enough that there was

some connection between brown nude Bhils and his weekly allowance; but the white helmet in the sunlight annoyed him, and he did not approve of the voice that broke his rest. Lazily as a gorged snake, he dragged himself out of the cave, and stood yawning and blinking at the entrance. The sunlight fell upon his flat right side, and Chinn wondered. Never had he seen a tiger marked after this fashion. Except for his head, which was staringly barred, he was dappled — not striped, but dappled like a child's rocking-horse in rich shades of smoky black on red gold. That portion of his belly and throat which should have been white was orange, and his tail and paws were black.

He looked leisurely for some ten seconds, and then deliberately lowered his head, his chin dropped and drawn in, staring intently at the man. The effect of this was to throw forward the round arch of his skull, with two broad bands across it, while below the bands glared the unwinking eyes; so that, head on, as he stood, he showed something like a diabolically scowling pantomime-mask. It was a piece of natural mesmerism that he had practised many times on his quarry, and though Chinn was by no means a terrified heifer, he stood for a while, held by the extraordinary oddity of the attack. The head — the body seemed to have been packed away behind it — the ferocious,

skull-like head, crept nearer to the switching of an angry tail-tip in the grass. Left and right the Bhils had scattered to let John Chinn subdue his own horse.

"My word!" he thought. "He's trying to frighten me!" and fired between the saucer-like eyes, leaping aside upon the shot.

A big coughing mass, reeking of carrion, bounded past him up the hill, and he followed discreetly. The tiger made no attempt to turn into the jungle; he was hunting for sight and breath — nose up, mouth open, the tremendous fore-legs scattering the gravel in spurts.

"Scuppered!" said John Chinn, watching the flight. "Now if he was a partridge he'd tower. Lungs must be full of blood."

The brute had jerked himself over a boulder and fallen out of sight the other side. John Chinn looked over with a ready barrel. But the red trail led straight as an arrow even to his grandfather's tomb, and there, among the smashed spirit-bottles and the fragments of the mud image, the life left, with a flurry and a grunt.

"If my worthy ancestor could see that," said John Chinn, "he'd have been proud of me. Eyes, lower jaw, and lungs. A very nice shot." He whistled for Bukta as he drew the tape over the stiffening bulk.

"Ten — six — eight — by Jove! It's nearly

eleven — call it eleven. Fore-arm, twenty-four — five — seven and a half. A short tail, too: three feet one. But *what* a skin! Oh, Bukta! Bukta! The men with the knives swiftly."

"Is he beyond question dead?" said an awe-stricken voice behind a rock.

"That was not the way I killed my first tiger," said Chinn. "I did not think that Bukta would run. I had no second gun."

"It — it is the Clouded Tiger," said Bukta, unheeding the taunt. "He is dead."

Whether all the Bhils, vaccinated and unvaccinated, of the Satpuras had lain by to see the kill, Chinn could not say; but the whole hill's flank rustled with little men, shouting, singing, and stamping. And yet, till he had made the first cut in the splendid skin, not a man would take a knife; and, when the shadows fell, they ran from the red-stained tomb, and no persuasion would bring them back till dawn. So Chinn spent a second night in the open, guarding the carcass from jackals, and thinking about his ancestor.

He returned to the lowlands to the triumphal chant of an escorting army three hundred strong, the Mahratta vaccinator close at his elbow, and the rudely dried skin a trophy before him. When that army suddenly and noiselessly disappeared, as quail in high corn, he argued he was near civilisation, and a turn in the road brought him upon the

camp of a wing of his own corps. He left the skin on a cart-tail for the world to see, and sought the Colonel.

"They're perfectly right," he explained earnestly. "There isn't an ounce of vice in 'em. They were only frightened. I've vaccinated the whole boiling, and they like it awfully. What are — what are we doing here, sir?"

"That's what I'm trying to find out," said the Colonel. "I don't know yet whether we're a piece of a brigade or a police force. However, I think we'll call ourselves a police force. How did you manage to get a Bhil vaccinated?"

"Well, sir," said Chinn, "I've been thinking it over, and, as far as I can make out, I've got a sort of hereditary influence over 'em."

"So I know, or I wouldn't have sent you; but *what*, exactly?"

"It's rather rummy. It seems, from what I can make out, that I'm my own grandfather reincarnated, and I've been disturbing the peace of the country by riding a pad-tiger of nights. If I hadn't done that, I don't think they'd have objected to the vaccination; but the two together were more than they could stand. And so, sir, I've vaccinated 'em, and shot my tiger-horse as a sort o' proof of good faith. You never saw such a skin in your life."

The Colonel tugged his moustache thought-

fully. "Now, how the deuce," said he, "am I to include that in my report?"

Indeed, the official version of the Bhils' anti-vaccination stampede said nothing about Lieutenant John Chinn, his godship. But Bukta knew, and the corps knew, and every Bhil in the Satpura hills knew.

And now Bukta is zealous that John Chinn shall swiftly be wedded and impart his powers to a son; for if the Chinn succession fails, and the little Bhils are left to their own imaginings, there will be fresh trouble in the Satpuras.

THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA

THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP SEA

All supplies very bad and dear, and there are no facilities for even the smallest repairs.—*Sailing Directions.*

HER nationality was British, but you will not find her house-flag in the list of our mercantile marine. She was a nine-hundred-ton, iron, schooner-rigged, screw cargo-boat, differing externally in no way from any other tramp of the sea. But it is with steamers as it is with men. There are those who will for a consideration sail extremely close to the wind; and, in the present state of a fallen world, such people and such steamers have their use. From the hour that the *Aglaia* first entered the Clyde — new, shiny, and innocent, with a quart of cheap champagne trickling down her cut-water — Fate and her owner, who was also her captain, decreed that she should deal with embarrassed crowned heads, fleeing Presidents, financiers of over-extended ability, women to whom change of air was imperative, and the lesser law-breaking Powers. Her career led her sometimes into the Admiralty Courts, where the sworn statements of her skipper filled his brethren with envy. The mariner can-

not tell or act a lie in the face of the sea, or mislead a tempest; but, as lawyers have discovered, he makes up for chances withheld when he returns to shore, an affidavit in either hand.

The *Aglaia* figured with distinction in the great *Mackinaw* salvage-case. It was her first slip from virtue, and she learned how to change her name, but not her heart, and to run across the sea. As the *Guiding Light* she was very badly wanted in a South American port for the little matter of entering harbour at full speed, colliding with a coal-hulk and the State's only man-of-war, just as that man-of-war was going to coal. She put to sea without explanations, though three forts fired at her for half an hour. As the *Julia M'Gregor* she had been concerned in picking up from a raft certain gentlemen who should have stayed in Nouméa, but who preferred making themselves vastly unpleasant to authority in quite another quarter of the world; and as the *Shah-in-Shah* she had been overtaken on the high seas, indecently full of munitions of war, by the cruiser of an agitated Power at issue with its neighbour. That time she was very nearly sunk, and her riddled hull gave eminent lawyers of two countries great profit. After a season she reappeared as the *Martin Hunt*, painted a dull slate-colour, with pure saffron funnel, and boats of robin's-egg blue, engaging in the Odessa trade till she was invited (and the invitation could

not well be disregarded) to keep away from Black Sea ports altogether.

She had ridden through many waves of depression. Freights might drop out of sight, Seamen's Unions throw spanners and nuts at certificated masters, or stevedores combine till cargo perished on the dock-head; but the boat of many names came and went, busy, alert, and inconspicuous always. Her skipper made no complaint of hard times, and port officers observed that her crew signed and signed again with the regularity of Atlantic liner boatswains. Her name she changed as occasion called; her well-paid crew never; and a large percentage of the profits of her voyages was spent with an open hand on her engine-room. She never troubled the underwriters, and very seldom stopped to talk with a signal-station, for her business was urgent and private.

But an end came to her tradings, and she perished in this manner. Deep peace brooded over Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australasia, and Polynesia. The Powers dealt together more or less honestly; banks paid their depositors to the hour; diamonds of price came safely to the hands of their owners; Republics rested content with their Dictators; diplomats found no one whose presence in the least incommoded them; monarchs lived openly with their lawfully wedded wives. It was as though the whole earth had put

on its best Sunday bib and tucker; and business was very bad for the *Martin Hunt*. The great, virtuous calm enguifed her, slate sides, yellow funnel, and all, but cast up in another hemisphere the steam whaler *Haliotis*, black and rusty, with a manure-coloured funnel, a litter of dingy white boats, and an enormous stove, or furnace, for boiling blubber on her forward well-deck. There could be no doubt that her trip was successful, for she lay at several ports not too well known, and the smoke of her trying-out insulted the beaches.

Anon she departed, at the speed of the average London four-wheeler, and entered a semi-inland sea, warm, still, and blue, which is, perhaps, the most strictly preserved water in the world. There she stayed for a certain time, and the great stars of those mild skies beheld her playing puss-in-the-corner among islands where whales are never found. All that while she smelt abominably, and the smell, though fishy, was not whalesome. One evening calamity descended upon her from the island of Pygang-Watai, and she fled, while her crew jeered at a fat black-and-brown gunboat puffing far behind. They knew to the last revolution the capacity of every boat, on those seas, that they were anxious to avoid. A British ship with a good conscience does not, as a rule, flee from the man-of-war of a foreign Power, and it is also

considered a breach of etiquette to stop and search British ships at sea. These things the skipper of the *Haliotis* did not pause to prove, but held on at an inspiriting eleven knots an hour till nightfall. One thing only he overlooked.

The Power that kept an expensive steam-patrol moving up and down those waters (they had dodged the two regular ships of the station with an ease that bred contempt) had newly brought up a third and a fourteen-knot boat with a clean bottom to help the work; and that was why the *Haliotis*, driving hard from the east to the west, found herself at daylight in such a position that she could not help seeing an arrangement of four flags, a mile and a half behind, which read: "Heave to, or take the consequences!"

She had her choice, and she took it. The end came when, presuming on her lighter draught, she tried to draw away northward over a friendly shoal. The shell that arrived by way of the Chief Engineer's cabin was some five inches in diameter, with a practice, not a bursting, charge. It had been intended to cross her bows, and that was why it knocked the framed portrait of the Chief Engineer's wife — and she was a very pretty girl — on to the floor, splintered his wash-hand stand, crossed the alleyway into the engine-room, and striking on a grating, dropped directly in front of the forward engine, where it burst, neatly

fracturing both the bolts that held the connecting-rod to the forward crank.

What follows is worth consideration. The forward engine had no more work to do. Its released piston-rod, therefore, drove up fiercely, with nothing to check it, and started most of the nuts of the cylinder-cover. It came down again, the full weight of the steam behind it, and the foot of the disconnected connecting-rod, useless as the leg of a man with a sprained ankle, flung out to the right and struck the starboard, or right-hand, cast-iron supporting-column of the forward engine, cracking it clean through about six inches above the base, and wedging the upper portion outwards three inches towards the ship's side. There the connecting-rod jammed. Meantime, the after-engine, being as yet unembarrassed, went on with its work, and in so doing brought round at its next revolution the crank of the forward engine, which smote the already jammed connecting-rod, bending it and therewith the piston-rod cross-head — the big cross-piece that slides up and down so smoothly.

The cross-head jammed sideways in the guides, and, in addition to putting further pressure on the already broken starboard supporting-column, cracked the port, or left-hand, supporting-column in two or three places. There being nothing more that could be made to move, the engines

brought up, all standing, with a hiccup that seemed to lift the *Haliotis* a foot out of the water; and the engine-room staff, opening every steam outlet that they could find in the confusion, arrived on deck somewhat scalded, but calm. There was a sound below of things happening — a rushing, clicking, purring, grunting, rattling noise that did not last for more than a minute. It was the machinery adjusting itself, on the spur of the moment, to a hundred altered conditions. Mr. Wardrop, one foot on the upper grating, inclined his ear sideways, and groaned. You cannot stop engines working at twelve knots an hour in three seconds without disorganising them. The *Haliotis* slid forward in a cloud of steam, shrieking like a wounded horse. There was nothing more to do. The five-inch shell with a reduced charge had settled the situation. And when you are full, all three holds, of strictly preserved pearls; when you have cleaned out the Tanna Bank, the Sea-Horse Bank, and four other banks from one end to the other of the Amanala Sea — when you have ripped out the very heart of a rich Government monopoly so that five years will not repair your wrongdoings — you must smile and take what is in store. But the skipper reflected, as a launch put out from the man-of-war, that he had been bombarded on the high seas, with the British flag — several of them — picturesquely disposed

above him, and tried to find comfort from the thought.

"Where," said the stolid naval lieutenant hoisting himself aboard, "where are those dam' pearls?"

They were there beyond evasion. No affidavit could do away with the fearful smell of decayed oysters, the diving-dresses, and the shell-littered hatches. They were there to the value of seventy thousand pounds, more or less; and every pound poached.

The man-of-war was annoyed; for she had used up many tons of coal, she had strained her tubes, and, worse than all, her officers and crew had been hurried. Every one on the *Haliotis* was arrested and rearrested several times, as each officer came aboard; then they were told by what they esteemed to be the equivalent of a midshipman that they were to consider themselves prisoners, and finally were put under arrest.

"It's not the least good," said the skipper, suavely. "You'd much better send us a tow — "

"Be still — you are arrest!" was the reply.

"Where the devil do you expect we are going to escape to? We're helpless. You've got to tow us into somewhere, and explain why you fired on us. Mr. Wardrop, we're helpless, aren't we?"

"Ruined from end to end," said the man of

machinery. "If she rolls, the forward cylinder will come down and go through her bottom. Both columns are clean cut through. There's nothing to hold anything up."

The council of war clanked off to see if Mr. Wardrop's words were true. He warned them that it was as much as a man's life was worth to enter the engine-room, and they contented themselves with a distant inspection through the thinning steam. The *Haliotis* lifted to the long, easy swell, and the starboard supporting-column ground a trifle, as a man grits his teeth under the knife. The forward cylinder was depending on that unknown force men call the pertinacity of materials, which now and then balances that other heartbreaking power, the perversity of inanimate things.

"You see!" said Mr. Wardrop, hurrying them away. "The engines aren't worth their price as old iron."

"We tow," was the answer. "Afterwards we shall confiscate."

The man-of-war was short-handed, and did not see the necessity for putting a prize-crew aboard the *Haliotis*. So she sent one sublieutenant, whom the skipper kept very drunk, for he did not wish to make the tow too easy, and, moreover, he had an inconspicuous little rope hanging from the stern of his ship.

Then they began to tow at an average speed of four knots an hour. The *Haliotis* was very hard to move, and the gunnery-lieutenant, who had fired the five-inch shell, had leisure to think upon consequences. Mr. Wardrop was the busy man. He borrowed all the crew to shore up the cylinders with spars and blocks from the bottom and sides of the ship. It was a day's risky work; but anything was better than drowning at the end of a tow-rope; and if the forward cylinder had fallen, it would have made its way to the sea-bed, and taken the *Haliotis* after.

"Where are we going to, and how long will they tow us?" he asked of the skipper.

"God knows! and this prize-lieutenant's drunk. What do you think you can do?"

"There's just the bare chance," Mr. Wardrop whispered, though no one was within hearing—"there's just the bare chance o' repairin' her, if a man knew how. They've twisted the very guts out of her, bringing her up with that jerk; but I'm saying that, with time and patience, there's just the chance o' making steam yet. *We* could do it."

The skipper's eye brightened. "Do you mean," he began, "that she is any good?"

"Oh, no," said Mr. Wardrop. "She'll need three thousand pounds in repairs, at the lowest, if she's to take the sea again, an' that apart from any injury to her structure. She's like a man fallen

down five pair o' stairs. We can't tell for months what has happened; but we know she'll never be good again without a new inside. Ye should see the condenser-tubes an' the steam connections to the donkey, for two things only. I'm not afraid of them repairin' her. I'm afraid of them stealin' things."

"They've fired on us. They'll have to explain that."

"Our reputation's not good enough to ask for explanations. Let's take what we have and be thankful. Ye would not have consuls rememberin' the *Guidin' Light*, an' the *Shah-in-Shah*, an' the *Aglaia*, at this most alarmin' crisis. We've been no better than pirates these ten years. Under Providence we're no worse than thieves now. We've much to be thankful for — if we e'er get back to her."

"Make it your own way, then," said the skipper. "If there's the least chance — "

"I'll leave none," said Mr. Wardrop — "none that they'll dare to take. Keep her heavy on the tow, for we need time."

The skipper never interfered with the affairs of the engine-room, and Mr. Wardrop — an artist in his profession — turned to and composed a work terrible and forbidding. His background was the dark-grained sides of the engine-room; his material the metals of power and strength, helped out with

spars, baulks, and ropes. The man-of-war towed sullenly and viciously. The *Haliotis* behind her hummed like a hive before swarming. With extra and totally unneeded spars her crew blocked up the space round the forward engine till it resembled a statue in its scaffolding, and the butts of the shores interfered with every view that a dispassionate eye might wish to take. And that the dispassionate mind might be swiftly shaken out of its calm, the well-sunk bolts of the shores were wrapped round untidily with loose ends of ropes, giving a studied effect of most dangerous insecurity. Next, Mr. Wardrop took up a collection from the after-engine, which, as you will remember, had not been affected in the general wreck. The cylinder escape-valve he abolished with a flogging-hammer. It is difficult in far-off ports to come by such valves, unless, like Mr. Wardrop, you keep duplicates in store. At the same time men took off the nuts of two of the great holding-down bolts that serve to keep the engines in place on their solid bed. An engine violently arrested in mid-career may easily jerk off the nut of a holding-down bolt, and this accident looked very natural.

Passing along the tunnel, he removed several shaft coupling-bolts and -nuts, scattering other and ancient pieces of iron underfoot. Cylinder-bolts he cut off to the number of six from the

after-engine cylinder, so that it might match its neighbour, and stuffed the bilge- and feed-pumps with cotton-waste. Then he made up a neat bundle of the various odds and ends that he had gathered from the engines—little things like nuts and valve-spindles, all carefully tallowed—and retired with them under the floor of the engine-room, where he sighed, being fat, as he passed from manhole to manhole of the double bottom, and in a fairly dry submarine compartment hid them. Any engineer, particularly in an unfriendly port, has a right to keep his spare stores where he chooses; and the foot of one of the cylinder shores blocked all entrance into the regular store-room, even if that had not been already closed with steel wedges. In conclusion, he disconnected the after-engine, laid piston and connecting-rod, carefully tallowed, where it would be most inconvenient to the casual visitor, took out three of the eight collars of the thrust-block, hid them where only he could find them again, filled the boilers by hand, wedged the sliding doors of the coal-bunkers, and rested from his labours. The engine-room was a cemetery, and it did not need the contents of the ash-lift through the skylight to make it any worse.

He invited the skipper to look at the completed work.

"Saw ye ever such a forsaken wreck as that?" said he, proudly. "It almost frights *me* to go

under those shores. Now, what d' you think they'll do to us?"

"Wait till we see," said the skipper. "It'll be bad enough when it comes."

He was not wrong. The pleasant days of towing ended all too soon, though the *Haliotis* trailed behind her a heavily weighted jib stayed out into the shape of a pocket; and Mr. Wardrop was no longer an artist of imagination, but one of seven-and-twenty prisoners in a prison full of insects. The man-of-war had towed them to the nearest port, not to the headquarters of the colony, and when Mr. Wardrop saw the dismal little harbour, with its ragged line of Chinese junks, its one crazy tug, and the boat-building shed that, under the charge of a philosophical Malay, represented a dockyard, he sighed and shook his head.

"I did well," he said. "This is the habitation o' wreckers an' thieves. We're at the uttermost ends of the earth. Think you they'll ever know in England?"

"Doesn't look like it," said the skipper.

They were marched ashore with what they stood up in, under a generous escort, and were judged according to the customs of the country, which, though excellent, are a little out of date. There were the pearls; there were the poachers; and there sat a small but hot Governor. He consulted for a while, and then things began to move

with speed, for he did not wish to keep a hungry crew at large on the beach, and the man-of-war had gone up the coast. With a wave of his hand — a stroke of the pen was not necessary — he consigned them to the *blakgang-tana*, the back-country, and the hand of the Law removed them from his sight and the knowledge of men. They were marched into the palms, and the back-country swallowed them up — all the crew of the *Haliotis*.

Deep peace continued to brood over Europe, Asia, Africa, America, Australasia, and Polynesia.

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It was the firing that did it. They should have kept their counsel; but when a few thousand foreigners are bursting with joy over the fact that a ship under the British flag has been fired at on the high seas, news travels quickly; and when it came out that the pearl-stealing crew had not been allowed access to their consul (there was no consul within a few hundred miles of that lonely port) even the friendliest of Powers has a right to ask questions. The great heart of the British public was beating furiously on account of the performance of a notorious race-horse, and had not a throb to waste on distant accidents; but somewhere deep in the hull of the ship of State there is machinery which more or less accurately takes charge of foreign affairs. That machinery began to revolve,

and who so shocked and surprised as the Power that had captured the *Haliotis?* It explained that colonial governors and far-away men-of-war were difficult to control, and promised that it would most certainly make an example both of the Governor and the vessel. As for the crew reported to be pressed into military service in tropical climes, it would produce them as soon as possible, and it would apologise, if necessary. Now, no apologies were needed. When one nation apologises to another, millions of amateurs who have no earthly concern with the difficulty hurl themselves into the strife and embarrass the trained specialist. It was requested that the crew be found, if they were still alive — they had been eight months beyond knowledge — and it was promised that all would be forgotten.

The little Governor of the little port was pleased with himself. Seven-and-twenty white men made a very compact force to throw away on a war that had neither beginning nor end — a jungle-and-stockade fight that flickered and smouldered through the wet hot years in the hills a hundred miles away, and was the heritage of every wearied official. He had, he thought, deserved well of his country; and if only some one would buy the unhappy *Haliotis*, moored in the harbour below his verandah, his cup would be full. He looked at the neatly silvered lamps that he had

taken from her cabins, and thought of much that might be turned to account. But his countrymen in that moist climate had no spirit. They would peep into the silent engine-room, and shake their heads. Even the men-of-war would not tow her further up the coast, where the Governor believed that she could be repaired. She was a bad bargain; but her cabin carpets were undeniably beautiful, and his wife approved of her mirrors.

Three hours later cables were bursting round him like shells, for, though he knew it not, he was being offered as a sacrifice by the nether to the upper millstone, and his superiors had no regard for his feelings. He had, said the cables, grossly exceeded his power, and failed to report on events. He would, therefore — at this he cast himself back in his hammock — produce the crew of the *Haliotis*. He would send for them, and, if that failed, he would put his dignity on a pony and fetch them himself. He had no conceivable right to make pearl-poachers serve in any war. He would be held responsible.

Next morning the cables wished to know whether he had found the crew of the *Haliotis*. They were to be found, freed and fed — he was to feed them — till such time as they could be sent to the nearest English port in a man-of-war. If you abuse a man long enough in great words flashed over the sea-beds, things happen. The

Governor sent inland swiftly for his prisoners, who were also soldiers; and never was a militia regiment more anxious to reduce its strength. No power short of death could make these mad men wear the uniform of their service. They would not fight, except with their fellows, and it was for that reason the regiment had not gone to war, but stayed in a stockade, reasoning with the new troops. The autumn campaign had been a fiasco, but here were the Englishmen. All the regiment marched back to guard them, and the hairy enemy, armed with blow-pipes, rejoiced in the forest. Five of the crew had died, but there lined up on the Governor's verandah two-and-twenty men marked about the legs with the scars of leech-bites. A few of them wore fringes that had once been trousers; the others used loin-cloths of gay patterns; and they existed beautifully but simply in the Governor's verandah, and when he came out they sang at him. When you have lost seventy thousand pounds' worth of pearls, your pay, your ship, and all your clothes, and have lived in bondage for five months beyond the faintest pretences of civilisation, you know what true independence means, for you become the happiest of created things — natural man.

The Governor told the crew that they were evil, and they asked for food. When he saw how they ate, and when he remembered that none of the

pearl patrol-boats were expected for two months, he sighed. But the crew of the *Haliotis* lay down in the verandah, and said that they were pensioners of the Governor's bounty. A grey-bearded man, fat and bald-headed, his one garment a green-and-yellow loin-cloth, saw the *Haliotis* in the harbour, and bellowed for joy. The men crowded to the verandah-rail, kicking aside the long cane chairs. They pointed, gesticulated, and argued freely, without shame. The militia regiment sat down in the Governor's garden. The Governor retired to his hammock — it was as easy to be killed lying as standing — and his women squeaked from the shuttered rooms.

"She sold?" said the grey-bearded man, pointing to the *Haliotis*. He was Mr. Wardrop.

"No good," said the Governor, shaking his head. "No one come buy."

"He's taken my lamps, though," said the skipper. He wore one leg of a pair of trousers, and his eye wandered along the verandah. The Governor quailed. There were cuddy camp-stools and the skipper's writing-table in plain sight.

"They've cleaned her out, o' course," said Mr. Wardrop. "They would. We'll go aboard and take an inventory. See!" He waved his hands over the harbour. "We — live — there — now. Sorry?"

The Governor smiled a smile of relief.

"He's glad of that," said one of the crew, reflectively. "I shouldn't wonder."

They flocked down to the harbour-front, the militia regiment clattering behind, and embarked themselves in what they found — it happened to be the Governor's boat. Then they disappeared over the bulwarks of the *Haliotis*, and the Governor prayed that they might find occupation inside.

Mr. Wardrop's first bound took him to the engine-room; and when the others were patting the well-remembered decks, they heard him giving God thanks that things were as he had left them. The wrecked engines stood over his head untouched; no inexpert hand had meddled with his shores; the steel wedges of the store-room were rusted home; and, best of all, the hundred and sixty tons of good Australian coal in the bunkers had not diminished.

"I don't understand it," said Mr. Wardrop. "Any Malay knows the use o' copper. They ought to have cut away the pipes. And with Chinese junks coming here, too. It's a special interposition o' Providence."

"You think so," said the skipper, from above. "There's only been one thief here, and he's cleaned her out of all *my* things, anyhow."

Here the skipper spoke less than the truth, for under the planking of his cabin, only to be reached by a chisel, lay a little money which

never drew any interest — his sheet-anchor to windward. It was all in clean sovereigns that pass current the world over, and might have amounted to more than a hundred pounds.

"He's left me alone. Let's thank God," repeated Mr. Wardrop.

"He's taken everything else; look!"

The *Haliotis*, except as to her engine-room, had been systematically and scientifically gutted from one end to the other, and there was strong evidence that an unclean guard had camped in the skipper's cabin to regulate that plunder. She lacked glass, plate, crockery, cutlery, mattresses, cuddy carpets and chairs, all boats, and her copper ventilators. These things had been removed, with her sails and as much of the wire rigging as would not imperil the safety of the masts.

"He must have sold those," said the skipper. "The other things are in his house, I suppose."

Every fitting that could be pried or screwed out was gone. Port, starboard, and masthead lights; teak gratings; sliding sashes of the deck-house; the captain's chest of drawers, with charts and chart-table; photographs, brackets, and looking-glasses; cabin doors; rubber cuddy mats; hatch-irons; half the funnel-stays; cork fenders; carpenter's grindstone and tool-chest; holystones, swabs, squeegees; all cabin and pantry lamps; galley-fittings *en bloc*; flags and flag-locker;

clocks, chronometers; the forward compass and the ship's bell and belfry, were among the missing.

There were great scarred marks on the deck-planking over which the cargo-derricks had been hauled. One must have fallen by the way, for the bulwark-rails were smashed and bent and the side-plates bruised.

"It's the Governor," said the skipper. "He's been selling her on the instalment plan."

"Let's go up with spanners and shovels, and kill 'em all," shouted the crew. "Let's drown him, and keep the woman!"

"Then we'll be shot by that black-and-tan regiment — *our* regiment. What's the trouble ashore? They've camped our regiment on the beach."

"We're cut off, that's all. Go and see what they want," said Mr. Wardrop. "You've the trousers."

In his simple way the Governor was a strategist. He did not desire that the crew of the *Haliotis* should come ashore again, either singly or in detachments, and he proposed to turn their steamer into a convict-hulk. They would wait — he explained this from the quay to the skipper in the barge — and they would continue to wait till the man-of-war came along, exactly where they were. If one of them set foot ashore, the entire regiment would open fire, and he would not scruple to use

the two cannon of the town. Meantime food would be sent daily in a boat under an armed escort. The skipper, bare to the waist, and rowing, could only grind his teeth; and the Governor improved the occasion, and revenged himself for the bitter words in the cables, by saying what he thought of the morals and manners of the crew. The barge returned to the *Haliotis* in silence, and the skipper climbed aboard, white on the cheek-bones and blue about the nostrils.

"I knew it," said Mr. Wardrop; "and they won't give us good food, either. We shall have bananas morning, noon, and night, an' a man can't work on fruit. *We* know that."

Then the skipper cursed Mr. Wardrop for importing frivolous side-issues into the conversation; and the crew cursed one another, and the *Haliotis*, the voyage, and all that they knew or could bring to mind. They sat down in silence on the empty decks, and their eyes burned in their heads. The green harbour water chuckled at them overside. They looked at the palm-fringed hills inland, at the white houses above the harbour road, at the single tier of native craft by the quay, at the stolid soldiery sitting round the two cannon, and, last of all, at the blue bar of the horizon. Mr. Wardrop was buried in thought, and scratched imaginary lines with his untrimmed finger-nails on the planking.

"I make no promise," he said, at last, "for I can't say what may or may not have happened to them. But here's the ship, and here's us."

There was a little scornful laughter at this, and Mr. Wardrop knitted his brows. He recalled that in the days when he wore trousers he had been Chief Engineer of the *Haliotis*.

"Harland, Mackesy, Noble, Hay, Naughton, Fink, O'Hara, Trumbull."

"Here, sir!" The instinct of obedience waked to answer the roll-call of the engine-room.

"Below!"

They rose and went.

"Captain, I'll trouble you for the rest of the men as I want them. We'll get my stores out, and clear away the shores we don't need, and then we'll patch her up. *My* men will remember that they're in the *Haliotis*,— under *me*."

He went into the engine-room, and the others stared. They were used to the accidents of the sea, but this was beyond their experience. None who had seen the engine-room believed that anything short of new engines from end to end could stir the *Haliotis* from her moorings.

The engine-room stores were unearthed, and Mr. Wardrop's face, red with the filth of the bilges and the exertion of travelling on his stomach, lit with joy. The spare gear of the *Haliotis* had been unusually complete, and two-and-twenty men, armed

with screw-jacks, differential blocks, tackle, vices, and a forge or so, can look Kismet between the eyes without winking. The crew were ordered to replace the holding-down and shaft-bearing bolts, and return the collars of the thrust-block. When they had finished, Mr. Wardrop delivered a lecture on repairing compound engines without the aid of the shops, and the men sat about on the cold machinery. The cross-head jammed in the guides leered at them drunkenly, but offered no help. They ran their fingers hopelessly into the cracks of the starboard supporting-column, and picked at the ends of the ropes round the shores, while Mr. Wardrop's voice rose and fell echoing, till the quick tropic night closed down over the engine-room skylight.

Next morning the work of reconstruction began.

It has been explained that the foot of the connecting-rod was forced against the foot of the starboard supporting-column, which it had cracked through and driven outward towards the ship's skin. To all appearance the job was more than hopeless, for rod and column seemed to have been welded into one. But herein Providence smiled on them for one moment to hearten them through the weary weeks ahead. The second engineer — more reckless than resourceful — struck at random with a cold chisel into the cast-iron of the column, and a greasy, grey flake of metal flew from under

the imprisoned foot of the connecting-rod, while the rod itself fell away slowly, and brought up with a thunderous clang somewhere in the dark of the crank-pit. The guides-plates above were still jammed fast in the guides, but the first blow had been struck. They spent the rest of the day grooming the donkey-engine, which stood immediately forward of the engine-room hatch. Its tarpaulin, of course, had been stolen, and eight warm months had not improved the working parts. Further, the last dying hiccup of the *Haliotis* seemed — or it might have been the Malay from the boat-house — to have lifted the thing bodily on its bolts, and set it down inaccurately as regarded its steam connections.

"If we only had one single cargo-derrick!" Mr. Wardrop sighed. "We can take the cylinder-cover off by hand, if we sweat; but to get the rod out o' the piston's not possible unless we use steam. Well, there'll be steam the morn, if there's nothing else. She'll fizzle!"

Next morning men from the shore saw the *Haliotis* through a cloud, for it was as though the deck smoked. Her crew were chasing steam through the shaken and leaky pipes to its work in the forward donkey-engine; and where oakum failed to plug a crack, they stripped off their loin-cloths for lapping, and swore, half-boiled and mother-naked. The donkey-engine worked — at

a price — the price of constant attention and furious stoking — worked long enough to allow a wire-rope (it was made up of a funnel and a foremast-stay) to be led into the engine-room and made fast on the cylinder-cover of the forward engine. That rose easily enough, and was hauled through the skylight and on to the deck, many hands assisting the doubtful steam. Then came the tug of war, for it was necessary to get to the piston and the jammed piston-rod. They removed two of the piston junk-ring studs, screwed in two strong iron eye-bolts by way of handles, doubled the wire-rope, and set half a dozen men to smite with an extemporised battering-ram at the end of the piston-rod, where it peered through the piston, while the donkey-engine hauled upwards on the piston itself. After four hours of this furious work, the piston-rod suddenly slipped, and the piston rose with a jerk, knocking one or two men over into the engine-room. But when Mr. Wardrop declared that the piston had not split, they cheered, and thought nothing of their wounds; and the donkey-engine was hastily stopped; its boiler was nothing to tamper with.

And day by day their supplies reached them by boat. The skipper humbled himself once more before the Governor, and as a concession had leave to get drinking-water from the Malay boat-builder on the quay. It was not good drinking-water, but

the Malay was anxious to supply anything in his power, if he were paid for it.

Now when the jaws of the forward engine stood, as it were, stripped and empty, they began to wedge up the shores of the cylinder itself. That work alone filled the better part of three days — warm and sticky days, when the hands slipped and sweat ran into the eyes. When the last wedge was hammered home there was no longer an ounce of weight on the supporting-columns; and Mr. Wardrop rummaged the ship for boiler-plate three-quarters of an inch thick, where he could find it. There was not much available, but what there was was more than beaten gold to him. In one desperate forenoon the entire crew, naked and lean, haled back, more or less into place, the starboard supporting-column, which, as you remember, was cracked clean through. Mr. Wardrop found them asleep where they had finished the work, and gave them a day's rest, smiling upon them as a father while he drew chalk-marks about the cracks. They woke to new and more trying labour; for over each one of those cracks a plate of three-quarter-inch boiler-iron was to be worked hot, the rivet-holes being drilled by hand. All that time they were fed on fruits, chiefly bananas, with some sago.

Those were the days when men swooned over the ratchet-drill and the hand-forge, and where they fell they had leave to lie unless their bodies

were in the way of their fellows' feet. And so, patch upon patch, and a patch over all, the starboard supporting-column was clouted; but when they thought all was secure, Mr. Wardrop decreed that the noble patchwork would never support working engines; at the best, it could only hold the guide-bars approximately true. The dead-weight of the cylinders must be borne by vertical struts; and, therefore, a gang would repair to the bows, and take out, with files, the big bow-anchor davits, each of which was some three inches in diameter. They threw hot coals at Wardrop, and threatened to kill him, those who did not weep (they were ready to weep on the least provocation); but he hit them with iron bars heated at the end, and they limped forward, and the davits came with them when they returned. They slept sixteen hours on the strength of it, and in three days two struts were in place, bolted from the foot of the starboard supporting-column to the under side of the cylinder. There remained now the port, or condenser-column, which, though not so badly cracked as its fellow, had also been strengthened in four places with boiler-plate patches, but needed struts. They took away the main stanchions of the bridge for that work, and, crazy with toil, did not see till all was in place that the rounded bars of iron must be flattened from top to bottom to allow the air-pump levers

to clear them. It was Wardrop's oversight, and he wept bitterly before the men as he gave the order to unbolt the struts and flatten them with hammer and the flame. Now the broken engine was underpinned firmly, and they took away the wooden shores from under the cylinders, and gave them to the robbed bridge, thanking God for even half a day's work on gentle, kindly wood instead of the iron that had entered into their souls. Eight months in the back-country among the leeches, at a temperature of 84° moist, is very bad for the nerves.

They had kept the hardest work to the last, as boys save Latin prose, and, worn though they were, Mr. Wardrop did not dare to give them rest. The piston-rod and connecting-rod were to be straightened, and this was a job for a regular dockyard with every appliance. They fell to it, cheered by a little chalk showing of work done and time consumed which Mr. Wardrop wrote up on the engine-room bulkhead. Fifteen days had gone — fifteen days of killing labour — and there was hope before them.

It is curious that no man knows how the rods were straightened. The crew of the *Haliotis* remember that week very dimly, as a fever patient remembers the delirium of a long night. There were fires everywhere, they say; the whole ship was one consuming furnace, and the hammers

were never still. Now, there could not have been more than one fire at the most, for Mr. Wardrop distinctly recalls that no straightening was done except under his own eye. They remember, too, that for many years voices gave orders which they obeyed with their bodies, but their minds were abroad on all the seas. It seems to them that they stood through days and nights slowly sliding a bar backwards and forwards through a white glow that was part of the ship. They remember an intolerable noise in their burning heads from the walls of the stoke-hole, and they remember being savagely beaten by men whose eyes seemed asleep. When their shift was over they would draw straight lines in the air, anxiously and repeatedly, and would question one another in their sleep, crying, "Is she straight?"

At last — they do not remember whether this was by day or by night — Mr. Wardrop began to dance clumsily, and wept the while; and they too danced and wept, and went to sleep twitching all over; and when they woke, men said that the rods were straightened, and no one did any work for two days, but lay on the decks and ate fruit. Mr. Wardrop would go below from time to time, and pat the two rods where they lay, and they heard him singing hymns.

Then his trouble of mind went from him, and at the end of the third day's idleness he made a

drawing in chalk upon the deck, with letters of the alphabet at the angles. He pointed out that, though the piston-rod was more or less straight, the piston-rod cross-head — the thing that had been jammed sideways in the guides — had been badly strained, and had cracked the lower end of the piston-rod. He was going to forge and shrink a wrought-iron collar on the neck of the piston-rod where it joined the cross-head, and from the collar he would bolt a Y-shaped piece of iron whose lower arms should be bolted into the cross-head. If anything more were needed, they could use up the last of the boiler-plate.

So the forges were lit again, and men burned their bodies, but hardly felt the pain. The finished connection was not beautiful, but it seemed strong enough — at least, as strong as the rest of the machinery; and with that job their labours came to an end. All that remained was to connect up the engines, and to get food and water. The skipper and four men dealt with the Malay boat-builder — by night chiefly; it was no time to haggle over the price of sago and dried fish. The others stayed aboard and replaced piston, piston-rod, cylinder-cover, cross-head, and bolts, with the aid of the faithful donkey-engine. The cylinder-cover was hardly steam-proof, and the eye of science might have seen in the connecting-rod a flexure something like that of a Christmas-tree candle

which has melted and been straightened by hand over a stove, but, as Mr. Wardrop said, "She didn't hit anything."

As soon as the last bolt was in place, men tumbled over one another in their anxiety to get to the hand starting-gear, the wheel and worm, by which some engines can be moved when there is no steam aboard. They nearly wrenched off the wheel, but it was evident to the blindest eye that the engines stirred. They did not revolve in their orbits with any enthusiasm, as good machines should; indeed, they groaned not a little; but they moved over and came to rest in a way which proved that they still recognised man's hand. Then Mr. Wardrop sent his slaves into the darker bowels of the engine-room and the stoke-hole, and followed them with a flare-lamp. The boilers were sound, but would take no harm from a little scaling and cleaning. Mr. Wardrop would not have any one over-zealous, for he feared what the next stroke of the tool might show. "The less we know about her now," said he, "the better for us all, I'm thinkin'. Ye'll understand me when I say that this is in no sense regular engineerin'."

As his raiment, when he spoke, was his grey beard and uncut hair, they believed him. They did not ask too much of what they met, but polished and tallowed and scraped it to a false brilliancy.

"A lick of paint would make me easier in my

mind," said Mr. Wardrop, plaintively. "I know half the condenser-tubes are started; and the propeller-shaftin''s God knows how far out of the true, and we'll need a new air-pump, an' the main-steam leaks like a sieve, and there's worse each way I look; but — paint's like clothes to a man, an' ours is near all gone."

The skipper unearthed some stale ropy paint of the loathsome green that they used for the galleys of sailing-ships, and Mr. Wardrop spread it abroad lavishly to give the engines self-respect.

His own was returning day by day, for he wore his loin-cloth continuously; but the crew, having worked under orders, did not feel as he did. The completed work satisfied Mr. Wardrop. He would at the last have made shift to run to Singapore, and gone home without vengeance taken to show his engines to his brethren in the craft; but the others and the captain forbade him. They had not yet recovered their self-respect.

"It would be safer to make what ye might call a trial trip, but beggars mustn't be choosers; an' if the engines will go over to the hand-gear, the probability — I'm only saying it's a probability — the chance is that they'll hold up when we put steam on her."

"How long will you take to get steam?" said the skipper.

"God knows! Four hours — a day — half a

week. If I can raise sixty pound I'll not complain."

"Be sure of her first; we can't afford to go out half a mile, and break down."

"My soul and body, man, we're one continuous breakdown, fore an' aft! We might fetch Singapore, though."

"We'll break down at Pygang-Watai, where we can do good," was the answer, in a voice that did not allow argument. "She's *my* boat, and — I've had eight months to think in."

No man saw the *Haliotis* depart, though many heard her. She left at two in the morning, having cut her moorings, and it was none of her crew's pleasure that the engines should strike up a thundering half-seas-over chanty that echoed among the hills. Mr. Wardrop wiped away a tear as he listened to the new song.

"She's gibberin' — she's just gibberin'," he whimpered. "Yon's the voice of a maniac."

And if engines have any soul, as their masters believe, he was quite right. There were outcries and clamours, sobs and bursts of chattering laughter, silences where the trained ear yearned for the clear note, and torturing reduplications where there should have been one deep voice. Down the screw-shaft ran murmurs and warnings, while a heart-diseased flutter without told that the propeller needed re-keying.

"How does she make it?" said the skipper.

"She moves, but — but she's breakin' my heart. The sooner we're at Pygang-Watai, the better. She's mad, and we're waking the town."

"Is she at all near safe?"

"What do *I* care how safe she is? She's mad. Hear that, now! To be sure, nothing's hittin' anything, and the bearin's are fairly cool, but — can ye not hear?"

"If she goes," said the skipper, "I don't care a curse. And she's *my* boat, too."

She went, trailing a fathom of weed behind her. From a slow two knots an hour she crawled up to a triumphant four. Anything beyond that made the struts quiver dangerously, and filled the engine-room with steam. Morning showed her out of sight of land, and there was a visible ripple under her bows: but she complained bitterly in her bowels, and, as though the noise had called it, there shot along across the purple sea a swift, dark proa, hawk-like and curious, which presently ranged alongside and wished to know if the *Haliotis* were helpless. Ships, even the steamers of the white men, had been known to break down in those waters, and the honest Malay and Javanese traders would sometimes aid them in their own peculiar way. But this ship was not full of lady passengers and well-dressed officers. Men, white, naked and savage, swarmed down her sides — some with

red-hot iron bars, and others with large hammers — threw themselves upon those innocent inquiring strangers, and, before any man could say what had happened, were in full possession of the proa, while the lawful owners bobbed in the water overside. Half an hour later the proa's cargo of sago and trepang, as well as a doubtful-minded compass, was in the *Haliotis*. The two huge triangular mat sails, with their seventy-foot yards and booms, had followed the cargo, and were being fitted to the stripped masts of the steamer.

They rose, they swelled, they filled, and the empty steamer visibly laid over as the wind took them. They gave her nearly three knots an hour, and what better could men ask? But if she had been forlorn before, this new purchase made her horrible to see. Imagine a respectable charwoman in the tights of a ballet-dancer rolling drunk along the streets, and you will come to some faint notion of the appearance of that nine-hundred-ton, well-decked, once schooner-rigged cargo-boat as she staggered under her new help, shouting and raving across the deep. With steam and sail that marvellous voyage continued; and the bright-eyed crew looked over the rail, desolate, unkempt, unshorn, shamelessly clothed — beyond the decencies.

At the end of the third week she sighted the island of Pygang-Watai, whose harbour is the

turning-point of a pearl sea-patrol. Here the gunboats stay for a week ere they retrace their line. There is no village at Pygang-Watai; only a stream of water, some palms, and a harbour safe to rest in till the first violence of the southeast monsoon has blown itself out. They opened up the low coral beach, with its mound of whitewashed coal ready for supply, the deserted huts for the sailors, and the flagless flagstaff.

Next day there was no *Haliotis* — only a little proa rocking in the warm rain at the mouth of the harbour, whose crew watched with hungry eyes the smoke of a gunboat on the horizon.

Months afterwards there were a few lines in an English newspaper to the effect that some gunboat of some foreign Power had broken her back at the mouth of some far-away harbour by running at full speed into a sunken wreck.

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

PART I

I have done one braver thing
  Than all the worthies did;
And yet a braver thence doth spring,
  Which is to keep that hid.

The Undertaking.

"I[illegible] icially declared yet?"

"[illegible] 've gone as far as to admit 'extreme loc[illegible] ity,' and they've started relief-works in on[illegible] o districts, the paper says."

[illegible] means it will be declared as soon as they [illegible] e sure of the men and the rolling-stock. 'Shouldn't wonder if it were as bad as the '78 Famine."

"'Can't be," said Scott, turning a little in the long cane chair. "We've had fifteen-anna crops in the north, and Bombay and Bengal report more than they know what to do with. They'll be able to check it before it gets out of hand. It will only be local."

Martyn picked the "Pioneer" from the table,

read through the telegrams once more, and put up his feet on the chair-rests. It was a hot, dark, breathless evening, heavy with the smell of the newly watered Mall. The flowers in the Club gardens were dead and black on their stalks, the little lotus-pond was a circle of caked mud, and the tamarisk-trees were white with the dust of weeks. Most of the men were at the band-stand in the public gardens — from the Club verandah you could hear the native Police band hammering stale waltzes — or on the polo-ground, or in the high-walled fives-court, hotter than a Dutch oven. Half a dozen grooms, squatted at the heads of their ponies, waited their masters' return. From time to time a man would ride at a foot-pace into the Club compound, and listlessly loaf over to the whitewashed barracks beside the main building. These were supposed to be chambers. Men lived in them, meeting the same white faces night after night at dinner, and drawing out their office-work till the latest possible hour, that they might escape that doleful company.

"What are you going to do?" said Martyn, with a yawn. "Let's have a swim before dinner."

"'Water's hot. I was at the bath to-day."

"Play you game o' billiards — fifty up."

"It's a hundred and five in the hall now. Sit still and don't be so abominably energetic."

A grunting camel swung up to the porch,

his badged and belted rider fumbling a leather pouch.

"*Kubber-kargaz-ki-yektraaa*," the man whined, handing down the newspaper extra — a slip printed on one side only, and damp from the press. It was pinned up on the green-baize board, between notices of ponies for sale and fox-terriers missing.

Martyn rose lazily, read it, and whistled. "It's declared!" he cried. "One, two, three — eight districts go under the operations of the Famine Code *ek dum*. They've put Jimmy Hawkins in charge."

"Good business!" said Scott, with the first sign of interest he had shown. "When in doubt hire a Punjabi. I worked under Jimmy when I first came out and he belonged to the Punjab. He has more *bundobust* than most men."

"Jimmy's a Jubilee Knight now," said Martyn. "He's a good chap, even though he is a thrice-born civilian and went to the Benighted Presidency. What unholy names these Madras districts rejoice in — all *ungas* or *rungas* or *pillays* or *polliums!*"

A dog-cart drove up in the dusk, and a man entered, mopping his head. He was editor of the one daily paper at the capital of a Province of twenty-five million natives and a few hundred white men: as his staff was limited to himself and

one assistant, his office-hours ran variously from ten to twenty a day.

"Hi, Raines; you're supposed to know everything," said Martyn, stopping him. "How's this Madras 'scarcity' going to turn out?"

"No one knows as yet. There's a message as long as your arm coming in on the telephone. I've left my cub to fill it out. Madras has owned she can't manage it alone, and Jimmy seems to have a free hand in getting all the men he needs. Arbuthnot's warned to hold himself in readiness."

"'Badger' Arbuthnot?"

"The Peshawur chap. Yes: and the *Pi* wires that Ellis and Clay have been moved from the Northwest already, and they've taken half a dozen Bombay men, too. It's *pukka* famine, by the looks of it."

"They're nearer the scene of action than we are; but if it comes to indenting on the Punjab this early, there's more in this than meets the eye," said Martyn.

"Here to-day and gone to-morrow. 'Didn't come to stay for ever," said Scott, dropping one of Marryat's novels, and rising to his feet. "Martyn, your sister's waiting for you."

A rough grey horse was backing and shifting at the edge of the verandah, where the light of a kerosene lamp fell on a brown-calico habit and a white face under a grey-felt hat.

"Right, O!" said Martyn. "I'm ready. Better come and dine with us, if you've nothing to do, Scott. William, is there any dinner in the house?"

"I'll go home and see," was the rider's answer. "You can drive him over — at eight, remember."

Scott moved leisurely to his room, and changed into the evening-dress of the season and the country: spotless white linen from head to foot, with a broad silk *cummerbund*. Dinner at the Martyns' was a decided improvement on the goat-mutton, twiney-tough fowl, and tinned entrées of the Club. But it was a great pity that Martyn could not afford to send his sister to the hills for the hot weather. As an Acting District Superintendent of Police, Martyn drew the magnificent pay of six hundred depreciated silver rupees a month, and his little four-roomed bungalow said just as much. There were the usual blue-and-white-striped jail-made rugs on the uneven floor; the usual glass-studded Amritsar *phulkaris* draped on nails driven into the flaking whitewash of the walls; the usual half-dozen chairs that did not match, picked up at sales of dead men's effects; and the usual streaks of black grease where the leather punka-thong ran through the wall. It was as though everything had been unpacked the night before to be repacked next morning. Not a door in the house was true on its hinges. The little

windows, fifteen feet up, were darkened with wasp-nests, and lizards hunted flies between the beams of the wood-ceiled roof. But all this was part of Scott's life. Thus did people live who had such an income; and in a land where each man's pay, age, and position are printed in a book, that all may read, it is hardly worth while to play at pretence in word or deed. Scott counted eight years' service in the Irrigation Department, and drew eight hundred rupees a month, on the understanding that if he served the State faithfully for another twenty-two years he could retire on a pension of some four hundred rupees a month. His working-life, which had been spent chiefly under canvas or in temporary shelters where a man could sleep, eat, and write letters, was bound up with the opening and guarding of irrigation canals, the handling of two or three thousand workmen of all castes and creeds, and the payment of vast sums of coined silver. He had finished that spring, not without credit, the last section of the great Mosuhl Canal, and — much against his will, for he hated office-work — had been sent in to serve during the hot weather on the accounts and supply side of the Department, with sole charge of the sweltering sub-office at the capital of the Province. Martyn knew this; William, his sister, knew it; and everybody knew it. Scott knew, too, as well as the rest of the world, that Miss

Martyn had come out to India four years ago to keep house for her brother, who, as every one knew, had borrowed the money to pay for her passage, and that she ought, as all the world said, to have married at once. Instead of this, she had refused some half a dozen subalterns, a Civilian twenty years her senior, one Major, and a man in the Indian Medical Department. This, too, was common property. She had "stayed down three hot weathers," as the saying is, because her brother was in debt and could not afford the expense of her keep at even a cheap hill-station. Therefore her face was white as bone, and in the centre of her forehead was a big silvery scar about the size of a shilling — the mark of a Delhi sore, which is the same as a "Bagdad date." This comes from drinking bad water, and slowly eats into the flesh till it is ripe enough to be burned out.

None the less William had enjoyed herself hugely in her four years. Twice she had been nearly drowned while fording a river; once she had been run away with on a camel; had witnessed a midnight attack of thieves on her brother's camp; had seen justice administered, with long sticks, in the open under trees; could speak Urdu and even rough Punjabi with a fluency that was envied by her seniors; had entirely fallen out of the habit of writing to her aunts in England, or cutting the pages of the English magazines; had

been through a very bad cholera year, seeing sights unfit to be told; and had wound up her experiences by six weeks of typhoid fever, during which her head had been shaved — and hoped to keep her twenty-third birthday that September. It is conceivable that the aunts would not have approved of a girl who never set foot on the ground if a horse were within hail; who rode to dances with a shawl thrown over her skirt; who wore her hair cropped and curling all over her head; who answered indifferently to the name of William or Bill; whose speech was heavy with the flowers of the vernacular; who could act in amateur theatricals, play on the banjo, rule eight servants and two horses, their accounts and their diseases, and look men slowly and deliberately between the eyes — even after they had proposed to her and been rejected.

"I like men who do things," she had confided to a man in the Educational Department, who was teaching the sons of cloth-merchants and dyers the beauty of Wordsworth's "Excursion" in annotated cram-books; and when he grew poetical, William explained that she "didn't understand poetry very much; it made her head ache," and another broken heart took refuge at the Club. But it was all William's fault. She delighted in hearing men talk of their own work, and that is the most fatal way of bringing a man to your feet.

Scott had known her for some three years, meeting her, as a rule, under canvas, when his camp and her brother's joined for a day on the edge of the Indian Desert. He had danced with her several times at the big Christmas gatherings, when as many as five hundred white people came in to the station; and had always a great respect for her housekeeping and her dinners.

She looked more like a boy than ever when, the meal ended, she sat, rolling cigarettes, her low forehead puckered beneath the dark curls as she twiddled the papers and stuck out her rounded chin when the tobacco stayed in place, or, with a gesture as true as a school-boy's throwing a stone, tossed the finished article across the room to Martyn, who caught it with one hand, and continued his talk with Scott. It was all "shop,"—canals and the policing of canals; the sins of villagers who stole more water than they had paid for, and the grosser sin of native constables who connived at the thefts; of the transplanting bodily of villages to newly irrigated ground, and of the coming fight with the desert in the south when the Provincial funds should warrant the opening of the long-surveyed Luni Protective Canal System. And Scott spoke openly of his great desire to be put on one particular section of the work where he knew the land and the people; and Martyn sighed for a billet in the Himalayan foot-hills, and said his

mind of his superiors, and William rolled cigarettes and said nothing, but smiled gravely on her brother because he was happy.

At ten Scott's horse came to the door, and the evening was ended.

The lights of the two low bungalows in which the daily paper was printed showed bright across the road. It was too early to try to find sleep, and Scott drifted over to the editor. Raines, stripped to the waist like a sailor at a gun, lay half asleep in a long chair, waiting for night telegrams. He had a theory that if a man did not stay by his work all day and most of the night he laid himself open to fever: so he ate and slept among his files.

"Can you do it?" he said drowsily. "I didn't mean to bring you over."

"About what? I've been dining at the Martyns'."

"The Madras famine, of course. Martyn's warned, too. They're taking men where they can find 'em. I sent a note to you at the Club just now, asking if you could do us a letter once a week from the south — between two and three columns, say. Nothing sensational, of course, but just plain facts about who is doing what, and so forth. Our regular rates — ten rupees a column."

"'Sorry, but it's out of my line," Scott answered, staring absently at the map of India on the wall. "It's rough on Martyn — very. 'Wonder what

he'll do with his sister? 'Wonder what the deuce they'll do with me? I've no famine experience. This is the first I've heard of it. Am I ordered?"

"Oh, yes. Here's the wire. They'll put you on to relief-works," Raines said, "with a horde of Madrassis dying like flies; one native apothecary and half a pint of cholera-mixture among the ten thousand of you. It comes of your being idle for the moment. Every man who isn't doing two men's work seems to have been called upon. Hawkins evidently believes in Punjabis. It's going to be quite as bad as anything they have had in the last ten years."

"It's all in the day's work, worse luck. I suppose I shall get my orders officially some time to-morrow. I'm awfully glad I happened to drop in. 'Better go and pack my kit now. Who relieves me here — do you know?"

Raines turned over a sheaf of telegrams. "McEuan," said he, "from Murree."

Scott chuckled. "He thought he was going to be cool all summer. He'll be very sick about this. Well, no good talking. 'Night."

Two hours later, Scott, with a clear conscience, laid himself down to rest on a string cot in a bare room. Two worn bullock trunks, a leather water-bottle, a tin ice-box, and his pet saddle sewed up in sacking were piled at the door, and the Club secretary's receipt for last month's bill was under

his pillow. His orders came next morning, and with them an unofficial telegram from Sir James Hawkins, who was not in the habit of forgetting good men when he had once met them, bidding him report himself with all speed at some unpronounceable place fifteen hundred miles to the south, for the famine was sore in the land, and white men were needed.

A pink and fattish youth arrived in the red-hot noonday, whimpering a little at fate and famines which never allowed any one three months' pea He was Scott's successor — another cog in the chinery, moved forward behind his fellow w services, as the official announcement ran, placed at the disposal of the Madras Go for famine duty until further orders." Scot d over the funds in his charge, showed hin cool- est corner in the office, warned him aga of zeal, and, as twilight fell, departed Club in a hired carriage, with his faith servant, Faiz Ullah, and a mound of baggage atop, to catch the southern loopholed and bastioned railway-stat at from the thick brick walls struck h the face as if it had been a hot towel; a flected that there were at least five nights a our days of this travel before him. Faiz Ullah, used to the chances of service, plunged into the crowd on the stone platform, while Scott, a black cheroot be-

tween his teeth, waited till his compartment should be set away. A dozen native policemen, with their rifles and bundles, shouldered into the press of Punjabi farmers, Sikh craftsmen, and greasy-locked Afreedee pedlars, escorting with all pomp Martyn's uniform-case, water-bottles, ice-box, and bedding-roll. They saw Faiz Ullah's lifted hand, and steered for it.

"My Sahib and your Sahib," said Faiz Ullah to Martyn's man, "will travel together. Thou [illegible]d I, O brother, will thus secure the servants' [illegible]es close by; and because of our masters' au[illegible]ty none will dare to disturb us."

[illegible]en Faiz Ullah reported all things ready, [illegible]tled down at full length, coatless and b[illegible]on the broad leather-covered bunk. The hea[illegible]r the iron-arched roof of the station might [illegible] anything over a hundred degrees. At [illegible]oment Martyn entered, dripping.

[illegible] swear," said Scott, lazily; "it's too late [illegible] your carriage; and we'll divide the ice."

[illegible]e you doing here?" said the police-m[illegible]

"[illegible]o the Madras Government, same as you. [illegible], it's a bender of a night! Are you taking a[illegible] your men down?"

"A dozen. I suppose I shall have to superintend relief distributions. 'Didn't know you were under orders too."

"I didn't till after I left you last night. Raines had the news first. My orders came this morning. McEuan relieved me at four, and I got off at once. 'Shouldn't wonder if it wouldn't be a good thing — this famine — if we come through it alive."

"Jimmy ought to put you and me to work together," said Martyn; and then, after a pause: "My sister's here."

"Good business," said Scott, heartily. "Going to get off at Umballa, I suppose, and go up to Simla. Who'll she stay with there?"

"No-o; that's just the trouble of it. She's going down with me."

Scott sat bolt upright under the oil-lamps as the train jolted past Tarn-Taran. "What! You don't mean you couldn't afford — "

"'Tain't that. I'd have scraped up the money somehow."

"You might have come to me, to begin with," said Scott, stiffly; "we aren't altogether strangers."

"Well, you needn't be stuffy about it. I might, but — you don't know my sister. I've been explaining and exhorting and all the rest of it all day — lost my temper since seven this morning, and haven't got it back yet — but she wouldn't hear of any compromise. A woman's entitled to travel with her husband if she wants to; and William says she's on the same footing. You

see, we've been together all our lives, more or less, since my people died. It isn't as if she were an ordinary sister."

"All the sisters I've ever heard of would have stayed where they were well off."

"She's as clever as a man, confound her," Martyn went on. "She broke up the bungalow over my head while I was talking at her. 'Settled the whole thing in three hours — servants, horses, and all. I didn't get my orders till nine."

"Jimmy Hawkins won't be pleased," said Scott. "A famine's no place for a woman."

"Mrs. Jim — I mean Lady Jim's in camp with him. At any rate, she says she will look after my sister. William wired down to her on her own responsibility, asking if she could come, and knocked the ground from under me by showing me her answer."

Scott laughed aloud. "If she can do that she can take care of herself, and Mrs. Jim won't let her run into any mischief. There aren't many women, sisters or wives, who would walk into a famine with their eyes open. It isn't as if she didn't know what these things mean. She was through the Jaloo cholera last year."

The train stopped at Amritsar, and Scott went back to the ladies' compartment, immediately behind their carriage. William, with a cloth riding-cap on her curls, nodded affably.

"Come in and have some tea," she said. "'Best thing in the world for heat-apoplexy."

"Do I look as if I were going to have heat-apoplexy?"

"'Never can tell," said William, wisely. "It's always best to be ready."

She had arranged her compartment with the knowledge of an old campaigner. A felt-covered water-bottle hung in the draught of one of the shuttered windows; a tea-set of Russian china, packed in a wadded basket, stood on the seat; and a travelling spirit-lamp was clamped against the woodwork above it.

William served them generously, in large cups, hot tea, which saves the veins of the neck from swelling inopportunely on a hot night. It was characteristic of the girl that, her plan of action once settled, she asked for no comments on it. Life among men who had a great deal of work to do, and very little time to do it in, had taught her the wisdom of effacing, as well as of fending for, herself. She did not by word or deed suggest that she would be useful, comforting, or beautiful in their travels, but continued about her business serenely: put the cups back without clatter when tea was ended, and made cigarettes for her guests.

"This time last night," said Scott, "we didn't expect — er — this kind of thing, did we?"

"I've learned to expect anything," said William.

"You know, in our service, we live at the end of the telegraph; but, of course, this ought to be a good thing for us all, departmentally—if we live."

"It knocks us out of the running in our own Province," Scott replied, with equal gravity. "I hoped to be put on the Luni Protective Works this cold weather, but there's no saying how long the famine may keep us."

"Hardly beyond October, I should think," said Martyn. "It will be ended, one way or the other, then."

"And we've nearly a week of this," said William. "Sha'n't we be dusty when it's over?"

For a night and a day they knew their surroundings, and for a night and a day, skirting the edge of the great Indian Desert on a narrow-gauge railway, they remembered how in the days of their apprenticeship they had come by that road from Bombay. Then the languages in which the names of the stations were written changed, and they launched south into a foreign land, where the very smells were new. Many long and heavily laden grain-trains were in front of them, and they could feel the hand of Jimmy Hawkins from far off. They waited in extemporised sidings while processions of empty trucks returned to the north, and were coupled on to slow, crawling trains, and dropped at midnight, Heaven knew where; but it was furiously hot, and they walked to and fro

among sacks, and dogs howled. Then they came to an India more strange to them than to the untravelled Englishman — the flat, red India of palm-tree, palmyra-palm, and rice — the India of the picture-books, of "Little Harry and His Bearer" — all dead and dry in the baking heat. They had left the incessant passenger-traffic of the north and west far and far behind them. Here the people crawled to the side of the train, holding their little ones in their arms; and a loaded truck would be left behind, the men and women clustering round it like ants by spilled honey. Once in the twilight they saw on a dusty plain a regiment of little brown men, each bearing a body over his shoulder; and when the train stopped to leave yet another truck, they perceived that the burdens were not corpses, but only foodless folk picked up beside dead oxen by a corps of Irregular troops. Now they met more white men, here one and there two, whose tents stood close to the line, and who came armed with written authorities and angry words to cut off a truck. They were too busy to do more than nod at Scott and Martyn, and stare curiously at William, who could do nothing except make tea, and watch how her men staved off the rush of wailing, walking skeletons, putting them down three at a time in heaps, with their own hands uncoupling the marked trucks, or taking receipts from the hollow-eyed, weary white

men, who spoke another argot than theirs. They ran out of ice, out of soda-water, and out of tea; for they were six days and seven nights on the road, and it seemed to them like seven times seven years.

At last, in a dry, hot dawn, in a land of death, lit by long red fires of railway-sleepers, where they were burning the dead, they came to their destination, and were met by Jim Hawkins, the Head of the Famine, unshaven, unwashed, but cheery, and entirely in command of affairs.

Martyn, he decreed then and there, was to live on trains till further orders; was to go back with empty trucks, filling them with starving people as he found them, and dropping them at a famine-camp on the edge of the Eight Districts. He would pick up supplies and return, and his constables would guard the loaded grain-cars, also picking up people, and would drop them at a camp a hundred miles south. Scott — Hawkins was very glad to see Scott again — would that same hour take charge of a convoy of bullock-carts, and would go south, feeding as he went, to yet another famine-camp, where he would leave his starving — there would be no lack of starving on the route — and wait for orders by telegraph. Generally, Scott was in all small things to act as he thought best.

William bit her under lip. There was no one

in the wide world like her one brother, but Martyn's orders gave him no discretion. She came out on the platform, masked with dust from head to foot, a horse-shoe wrinkle on her forehead, put here by much thinking during the past week, but as self-possessed as ever. Mrs. Jim — who should have been Lady Jim but that no one remembered the title — took possession of her with a little gasp.

"Oh, I'm so glad you're here," she almost sobbed. "You oughtn't to, of course, but there — there isn't another woman in the place, and we must help each other, you know; and we've all the wretched people and the little babies they are selling."

"I've seen some," said William.

"Isn't it ghastly? I've bought twenty; they're in our camp: but won't you have something to eat first? We've more than ten people can do here; and I've got a horse for you. Oh, I'm so glad you've come, dear. You're a Punjabi, too, you know."

"Steady, Lizzie," said Hawkins, over his shoulder. "We'll look after you, Miss Martyn. 'Sorry I can't ask you to breakfast, Martyn. You'll have to eat as you go. Leave two of your men to help Scott. These poor devils can't stand up to load carts. Saunders" (this to the engine-driver, who was half asleep in the cab), "back down and get

those empties away. You've 'line clear' to Anundrapillay; they'll give you orders north of that. Scott, load up your carts from that B. P. P. truck, and be off as soon as you can. The Eurasian in the pink shirt is your interpreter and guide. You'll find an apothecary of sorts tied to the yoke of the second wagon. He's been trying to bolt; you'll have to look after him. Lizzie, drive Miss Martyn to camp, and tell them to send the red horse down here for me."

Scott, with Faiz Ullah and two policemen, was already busied with the carts, backing them up to the truck and unbolting the sideboards quietly, while the others pitched in the bags of millet and wheat. Hawkins watched him for as long as it took to fill one cart.

"That's a good man," he said. "If all goes well I shall work him hard." This was Jim Hawkins's notion of the highest compliment one human being could pay another.

An hour later Scott was under way; the apothecary threatening him with the penalties of the law for that he, a member of the Subordinate Medical Department, had been coerced and bound against his will and all laws governing the liberty of the subject; the pink-shirted Eurasian begging leave to see his mother, who happened to be dying some three miles away: "Only verree, verree short leave of absence, and will presently return, sar—";

the two constables, armed with staves, bringing up the rear; and Faiz Ullah, a Mohammedan's contempt for all Hindoos and foreigners in every line of his face, explaining to the drivers that though Scott Sahib was a man to be feared on all fours, he, Faiz Ullah, was Authority Itself.

The procession creaked past Hawkins's camp — three stained tents under a clump of dead trees, behind them the famine-shed, where a crowd of hopeless ones tossed their arms around the cooking-kettles.

"'Wish to Heaven William had kept out of it," said Scott to himself, after a glance. "We'll have cholera, sure as a gun, when the Rains break."

But William seemed to have taken kindly to the operations of the Famine Code, which, when famine is declared, supersede the workings of the ordinary law. Scott saw her, the centre of a mob of weeping women, in a calico riding-habit, and a blue-grey felt hat with a gold puggaree.

"I want fifty rupees, please. I forgot to ask Jack before he went away. Can you lend it me? It's for condensed-milk for the babies," said she.

Scott took the money from his belt, and handed it over without a word. "For goodness sake, take care of yourself," he said.

"Oh, I shall be all right. We ought to get the milk in two days. By the way, the orders are, I was to tell you, that you're to take one of Sir Jim's

horses. There's a grey Cabuli here that I thought would be just your style, so I've said you'd take him. Was that right?"

"That's awfully good of you. We can't either of us talk much about style, I am afraid."

Scott was in a weather-stained drill shooting-kit, very white at the seams and a little frayed at the wrists. William regarded him thoughtfully, from his pith helmet to his greased ankle-boots. "You look very nice, I think. Are you sure you've everything you'll need — quinine, chlorodyne, and so on?"

"'Think so," said Scott, patting three or four of his shooting-pockets as he mounted and rode alongside his convoy.

"Good-bye," he cried.

"Good-bye, and good luck," said William. "I'm awfully obliged for the money." She turned on a spurred heel and disappeared into the tent, while the carts pushed on past the famine-sheds, past the roaring lines of the thick, fat fires, down to the baked Gehenna of the South.

PART II

So let us melt and make no noise,
No tear-floods nor sigh-tempests move;
'Twere profanation of our joys
To tell the Laity our love.

A Valediction.

It was punishing work, even though he travelled by night and camped by day; but within the limits of his vision there was no man whom Scott could call master. He was as free as Jimmy Hawkins — freer, in fact, for the Government held the Head of the Famine tied neatly to a telegraph-wire, and if Jimmy had ever regarded telegrams seriously, the death-rate of that famine would have been much higher than it was.

At the end of a few days' crawling Scott learned something of the size of the India which he served, and it astonished him. His carts, as you know, were loaded with wheat, millet, and barley, good food-grains needing only a little grinding. But the people to whom he brought the life-giving stuffs were rice-eaters. They could hull rice in their mortars, but they knew nothing of the heavy stone querns of the North, and less of the material

that the white man convoyed so laboriously. They clamoured for rice — unhusked paddy, such as they were accustomed to — and, when they found that there was none, broke away weeping from the sides of the cart. What was the use of these strange hard grains that choked their throats? They would die. And then and there very many of them kept their word. Others took their allowance, and bartered enough millet to feed a man through a week for a few handfuls of rotten rice saved by some less unfortunate. A few put their share into the rice-mortars, pounded it, and made a paste with foul water; but they were very few. Scott understood dimly that many people in the India of the South ate rice, as a rule, but he had spent his service in a grain Province, had seldom seen rice in the blade or ear, and least of all would have believed that in time of deadly need men could die at arm's length of plenty, sooner than touch food they did not know. In vain the interpreters interpreted; in vain his two policemen showed in vigorous pantomime what should be done. The starving crept away to their bark and weeds, grubs, leaves, and clay, and left the open sacks untouched. But sometimes the women laid their phantoms of children at Scott's feet, looking back as they staggered away.

Faiz Ullah opined it was the will of God that these foreigners should die, and it remained only

to give orders to burn the dead. None the less there was no reason why the Sahib should lack his comforts, and Faiz Ullah, a campaigner of experience, had picked up a few lean goats and had added them to the procession. That they might give milk for the morning meal, he was feeding them on the good grain that these imbeciles rejected. "Yes," said Faiz Ullah; "if the Sahib thought fit, a little milk might be given to some of the babies"; but, as the Sahib well knew, babies were cheap, and, for his own part, Faiz Ullah held that there was no Government order as to babies. Scott spoke forcefully to Faiz Ullah and the two policemen, and bade them capture goats where they could find them. This they most joyfully did, for it was a recreation, and many ownerless goats were driven in. Once fed, the poor brutes were willing enough to follow the carts, and a few days' good food — food such as human beings died for lack of — set them in milk again.

"But I am no goatherd," said Faiz Ullah. "It is against my *izzat* [my honour]."

"When we cross the Bias River again we will talk of *izzat*," Scott replied. "Till that day thou and the policemen shall be sweepers to the camp, if I give the order."

"Thus, then, it is done," grunted Faiz Ullah, "if the Sahib will have it so"; and he showed

WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR

to give orders to burn the dead. None the le[illegible] there was no reason why the Sahib should lack h[illegible] comforts, and Faiz Ullah, a campaigner of exp[illegible] had picked up a few lean goats and h[illegible] [illegible] to the procession. That they mig[illegible] [illegible] the morning meal, he was feed[illegible] [illegible] good grain that these imbeciles [illegible] [illegible] said Faiz Ullah; "if the Sa[illegible] [illegible] little milk might be given to so[illegible] [illegible]; but, as the Sahib well k[illegible] [illegible] cheap, and, for his own part, Fa[illegible] [illegible] that there was no Government or[illegible] [illegible] spoke forcefully to Faiz Ul[illegible] [illegible] policemen, and bade them cap[illegible] [illegible] they could find them. This th[illegible] [illegible] a recreation, and m[illegible] [illegible] were driven in. Once fed, th[illegible] [illegible] enough to follow [illegible] [illegible] good food — food such [illegible] [illegible] for lack of — set them in m[illegible]

[illegible] said Faiz Ullah. [illegible]

[illegible] River again we w[illegible] [illegible] "Till that day th[illegible] [illegible] sweepers to the ca[illegible]

[illegible] granted Faiz [illegible]

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how a goat should be milked, while Scott stood over him.

"Now we will feed them," said Scott; "twice a day we will feed them"; and he bowed his back to the milking, and took a horrible cramp.

When you have to keep connection unbroken between a restless mother of kids and a baby who is at the point of death, you suffer in all your system. But the babies were fed. Each morning and evening Scott would solemnly lift them out one by one from their nest of gunny-bags under the cart-tilts. There were always many who could do no more than breathe, and the milk was dropped into their toothless mouths drop by drop, with due pauses when they choked. Each morning, too, the goats were fed; and since they would straggle without a leader, and since the natives were hirelings, Scott was forced to give up riding, and pace slowly at the head of his flocks, accommodating his step to their weaknesses. All this was sufficiently absurd, and he felt the absurdity keenly; but at least he was saving life, and when the women saw that their children did not die, they made shift to eat a little of the strange foods, and crawled after the carts, blessing the master of the goats.

"Give the women something to live for," said Scott to himself, as he sneezed in the dust of a hundred little feet, "and they'll hang on some-

how. This beats William's condensed-milk trick all to pieces. I shall never live it down, though."

He reached his destination very slowly, found that a rice-ship had come in from Burmah, and that stores of paddy were available; found also an overworked Englishman in charge of the shed, and, loading the carts, set back to cover the ground he had already passed. He left some of the children and half his goats at the famine-shed. For this he was not thanked by the Englishman, who had already more stray babies than he knew what to do with. Scott's back was suppled to stooping now, and he went on with his wayside ministrations in addition to distributing the paddy. More babies and more goats were added unto him; but now some of the babies wore rags, and beads round their wrists or necks. "*That*," said the interpreter, as though Scott did not know, "signifies that their mothers hope in eventual contingency to resume them offeecially."

"The sooner, the better," said Scott; but at the same time he marked, with the pride of ownership, how this or that little Ramasawmy was putting on flesh like a bantam. As the paddy-carts were emptied he headed for Hawkins's camp by the railway, timing his arrival to fit in with the dinner-hour, for it was long since he had eaten at a cloth. He had no desire to make any dramatic entry, but an accident of the sunset ordered it that when he

had taken off his helmet to get the evening breeze, the low light should fall across his forehead, and he could not see what was before him; while one waiting at the tent door beheld with new eyes a young man, beautiful as Paris, a god in a halo of golden dust, walking slowly at the head of his flocks, while at his knee ran small naked Cupids. But she laughed — William, in a slate-coloured blouse, laughed consumedly till Scott, putting the best face he could upon the matter, halted his armies and bade her admire the kindergarten. It was an unseemly sight, but the proprieties had been left ages ago, with the tea-party at Amritsar Station, fifteen hundred miles to the north.

"They are coming on nicely," said William. "We've only five-and-twenty here now. The women are beginning to take them away again."

"Are you in charge of the babies, then?"

"Yes — Mrs. Jim and I. We didn't think of goats, though. We've been trying condensed-milk and water."

"Any losses?"

"More than I care to think of," said William, with a shudder. "And you?"

Scott said nothing. There had been many little burials along his route — one cannot burn a dead baby — many mothers who had wept when they did not find again the children they had trusted to the care of the Government.

Then Hawkins came out carrying a razor, at which Scott looked hungrily, for he had a beard that he did not love. And when they sat down to dinner in the tent he told his tale in few words, as it might have been an official report. Mrs. Jim snuffled from time to time, and Jim bowed his head judicially; but William's grey eyes were on the clean-shaven face, and it was to her that Scott seemed to appeal.

"Good for the Pauper Province!" said William, her chin on her hand, as she leaned forward among the wine-glasses. Her cheeks had fallen in, and the scar on her forehead was more prominent than ever, but the well-turned neck rose roundly as a column from the ruffle of the blouse which was the accepted evening-dress in camp.

"It was awfully absurd at times," said Scott. "You see, I didn't know much about milking or babies. They'll chaff my head off, if the tale goes up North."

"Let 'em," said William, haughtily. "We've all done coolie-work since we came. I know Jack has." This was to Hawkins's address, and the big man smiled blandly.

"Your brother's a highly efficient officer, William," said he, "and I've done him the honour of treating him as he deserves. Remember, I write the confidential reports."

"Then you must say that William's worth her

weight in gold," said Mrs. Jim. "I don't know what we should have done without her. She has been everything to us." She dropped her hand upon William's, which was rough with much handling of reins, and William patted it softly. Jim beamed on the company. Things were going well with his world. Three of his more grossly incompetent men had died, and their places had been filled by their betters. Every day brought the Rains nearer. They had put out the famine in five of the Eight Districts, and, after all, the death-rate had not been too heavy — things considered. He looked Scott over carefully, as an ogre looks over a man, and rejoiced in his thews and iron-hard condition.

"He's just the least bit in the world tucked up," said Jim to himself, "but he can do two men's work yet." Then he was aware that Mrs. Jim was telegraphing to him, and according to the domestic code the message ran: "A clear case. Look at them!"

He looked and listened. All that William was saying was: "What can you expect of a country where they call a *bbistee* [a water-carrier] a *tunni-cutch?*" and all that Scott answered was: "I shall be glad to get back to the Club. Save me a dance at the Christmas Ball, won't you?"

"It's a far cry from here to the Lawrence Hall," said Jim. "Better turn in early, Scott. It's

paddy-carts to-morrow; you'll begin loading at five."

"Aren't you going to give Mr. Scott a single day's rest?"

"'Wish I could, Lizzie, but I'm afraid I can't. As long as he can stand up we must use him."

"Well, I've had one Europe evening, at least. By Jove, I'd nearly forgotten! What do I do about those babies of mine?"

"Leave them here," said William — "we are in charge of that — and as many goats as you can spare. I must learn how to milk now."

"If you care to get up early enough to-morrow I'll show you. I have to milk, you see. Half of 'em have beads and things round their necks. You must be careful not to take 'em off, in case the mothers turn up."

"You forget I've had some experience here."

"I hope to goodness you won't overdo." Scott's voice was unguarded.

"I'll take care of her," said Mrs. Jim, telegraphing hundred-word messages as she carried William off, while Jim gave Scott his orders for the coming campaign. It was very late — nearly nine o'clock.

"Jim, you're a brute," said his wife, that night; and the Head of the Famine chuckled.

"Not a bit of it, dear. I remember doing the first Jandiala Settlement for the sake of a girl in a

crinoline, and she was slender, Lizzie. I've never done as good a piece of work since. *He'll* work like a demon."

"But you might have given him one day."

"And let things come to a head now? No, dear; it's their happiest time."

"I don't believe either of the darlings know what's the matter with them. Isn't it beautiful? Isn't it lovely?"

"Getting up at three to learn to milk, bless her heart! Oh, ye Gods, why must we grow old and fat?"

"She's a darling. She has done more work under me—"

"Under *you!* The day after she came she was in charge and you were her subordinate. You've stayed there ever since; she manages you almost as well as you manage me."

"She doesn't, and that's why I love her. She's as direct as a man—as her brother."

"Her brother's weaker than she is. He's always coming to me for orders; but he's honest, and a glutton for work. I confess I'm rather fond of William, and if I had a daughter—"

The talk ended. Far away in the Derajat was a child's grave more than twenty years old, and neither Jim nor his wife spoke of it any more.

"All the same, you're responsible," Jim added, after a moment's silence.

"Bless 'em!" said Mrs. Jim, sleepily.

Before the stars paled, Scott, who slept in an empty cart, waked and went about his work in silence; it seemed at that hour unkind to rouse Faiz Ullah and the interpreter. His head being close to the ground, he did not hear William till she stood over him in the dingy old riding-habit, her eyes still heavy with sleep, a cup of tea and a piece of toast in her hands. There was a baby on the ground, squirming on a piece of blanket, and a six-year-old child peered over Scott's shoulder.

"Hai, you little rip," said Scott, "how the deuce do you expect to get your rations if you aren't quiet?"

A cool white hand steadied the brat, who forthwith choked as the milk gurgled into his mouth.

"'Mornin'," said the milker. "You've no notion how these little fellows can wriggle."

"Oh, yes. I have." She whispered, because the world was asleep. "Only I feed them with a spoon or a rag. Yours are fatter than mine. . . . And you've been doing this day after day?" The voice was almost lost.

"Yes; it was absurd. Now you try," he said, giving place to the girl. "Look out! A goat's not a cow."

The goat protested against the amateur, and there was a scuffle, in which Scott snatched up the baby. Then it was all to do over again, and Wil-

liam laughed softly and merrily. She managed, however, to feed two babies, and a third.

"Don't the little beggars take it well?" said Scott. "I trained 'em."

They were very busy and interested, when lo! it was broad daylight, and before they knew, the camp was awake, and they kneeled among the goats, surprised by the day, both flushed to the temples. Yet all the round world rolling up out of the darkness might have heard and seen all that had passed between them.

"Oh," said William, unsteadily, snatching up the tea and toast, "I had this made for you. It's stone-cold now. I thought you mightn't have anything ready so early. 'Better not drink it. It's — it's stone-cold."

"That's awfully kind of you. It's just right. It's awfully good of you, really. I'll leave my kids and goats with you and Mrs. Jim, and, of course, any one in camp can show you about the milking."

"Of course," said William; and she grew pinker and pinker and statelier and more stately, as she strode back to her tent, fanning herself with the saucer.

There were shrill lamentations through the camp when the elder children saw their nurse move off without them. Faiz Ullah unbent so far as to jest with the policemen, and Scott turned

purple with shame because Hawkins, already in the saddle, roared.

A child escaped from the care of Mrs. Jim, and, running like a rabbit, clung to Scott's boot, William pursuing with long, easy strides.

"I will not go — I will not go!" shrieked the child, twining his feet round Scott's ankle. "They will kill me here. I do not know these people."

"I say," said Scott, in broken Tamil, "I say, she will do you no harm. Go with her and be well fed."

"Come!" said William, panting, with a wrathful glance at Scott, who stood helpless and, as it were, hamstrung.

"Go back," said Scott quickly to William. "I'll send the little chap over in a minute."

The tone of authority had its effect, but in a way Scott did not exactly intend. The boy loosened his grasp, and said with gravity: "I did not know the woman was thine. I will go." Then he cried to his companions, a mob of three-, four- and five-year-olds waiting on the success of his venture ere they stampeded: "Go back and eat. It is our man's woman. She will obey his orders."

Jim collapsed where he sat; Faiz Ullah and the two policemen grinned; and Scott's orders to the cartmen flew like hail.

"That is the custom of the Sahibs when truth

is told in their presence," said Faiz Ullah. "The time comes that I must seek new service. Young wives, especially such as speak our language and have knowledge of the ways of the Police, make great trouble for honest butlers in the matter of weekly accounts."

What William thought of it all she did not say, but when her brother, ten days later, came to camp for orders, and heard of Scott's performances, he said, laughing: "Well, that settles it. He'll be *Bakri* Scott to the end of his days." (*Bakri*, in the Northern vernacular, means a goat.) "What a lark! I'd have given a month's pay to have seen him nursing famine babies. I fed some with *conjee* [rice-water], but that was all right."

"It's perfectly disgusting," said his sister, with blazing eyes. "A man does something like — like that — and all you other men think of is to give him an absurd nickname, and then you laugh and think it's funny."

"Ah," said Mrs. Jim, sympathetically.

"Well, *you* can't talk, William. You christened little Miss Demby the Button-quail, last cold weather; you know you did. India's the land of nicknames."

"That's different," William replied. "She was only a girl, and she hadn't done anything except walk like a quail, and she *does*. But it isn't fair to make fun of a man."

"Scott won't care," said Martyn. "You can't get a rise out of old Scotty. I've been trying for eight years, and you've only known him for three. How does he look?"

"He looks very well," said William, and went away with a flushed cheek. "*Bakri* Scott, indeed!" Then she laughed to herself, for she knew her country. "But it will be *Bakri* all the same"; and she repeated it under her breath several times slowly, whispering it into favour.

When he returned to his duties on the railway, Martyn spread the name far and wide among his associates, so that Scott met it as he led his paddy-carts to war. The natives believed it to be some English title of honour, and the cart-drivers used it in all simplicity till Faiz Ullah, who did not approve of foreign japes, broke their heads. There was very little time for milking now, except at the big camps, where Jim had extended Scott's idea and was feeding large flocks on the useless northern grains. Sufficient paddy had come now into the Eight Districts to hold the people safe, if it were only distributed quickly, and for that purpose no one was better than the big Canal officer, who never lost his temper, never gave an unnecessary order, and never questioned an order given. Scott pressed on, saving his cattle, washing their galled necks daily, so that no time should be lost on the road; reported himself with his rice at the minor

famine-sheds, unloaded, and went back light by forced night-march to the next distributing centre, to find Hawkins's unvarying telegram: "Do it again." And he did it again and again, and yet again, while Jim Hawkins, fifty miles away, marked off on a big map the tracks of his wheels gridironing the stricken lands. Others did well—Hawkins reported at the end they all did well—but Scott was the most excellent, for he kept good coined rupees by him, settled for his own cart-repairs on the spot, and ran to meet all sorts of unconsidered extras, trusting to be recouped later on. Theoretically, the Government should have paid for every shoe and linchpin, for every hand employed in the loading; but Government vouchers cash themselves slowly, and intelligent and efficient clerks write at great length, contesting unauthorised expenditures of eight annas. The man who wants to make his work a success must draw on his own bank-account of money or other things as he goes.

"I told you he'd work," said Jimmy to his wife, at the end of six weeks. "He's been in sole charge of a couple of thousand men up north, on the Mosuhl Canal, for a year; but he gives less trouble than young Martyn with his ten constables; and I'm morally certain—only Government doesn't recognise moral obligations—he's spent about half his pay to grease his wheels. Look at

this, Lizzie, for one week's work! Forty miles in two days with twelve carts; two days' halt building a famine-shed for young Rogers. (Rogers ought to have built it himself, the idiot!) Then forty miles back again, loading six carts on the way, and distributing all Sunday. Then in the evening he pitches in a twenty-page Demi-Official to me, saying the people where he is might be 'advantageously employed on relief-work,' and suggesting that he put 'em to work on some broken-down old reservoir he's discovered, so as to have a good water-supply when the Rains break. 'Thinks he can cauk the dam in a fortnight. Look at his marginal sketches — aren't they clear and good? I knew he was *pukka*, but I didn't know he was as *pukka* as this."

"I must show these to William," said Mrs. Jim. "The child's wearing herself out among the babies."

"Not more than you are, dear. Well, another two months ought to see us out of the wood. I'm sorry it's not in my power to recommend you for a V. C."

William sat late in her tent that night, reading through page after page of the square handwriting, patting the sketches of proposed repairs to the reservoir, and wrinkling her eyebrows over the columns of figures of estimated water-supply.

"And he finds time to do all this," she cried to

herself, "and — well, I also was present. I've saved one or two babies."

She dreamed for the twentieth time of the god in the golden dust, and woke refreshed to feed loathsome black children, scores of them, wastrels picked up by the wayside, their bones almost breaking their skin, terrible and covered with sores.

Scott was not allowed to leave his cart-work, but his letter was duly forwarded to the Government, and he had the consolation, not rare in India, of knowing that another man was reaping where he had sown. That also was discipline profitable to the soul.

"He's much too good to waste on canals," said Jimmy. "Any one can oversee coolies. You needn't be angry, William; he can — but I need my pearl among bullock-drivers, and I've transferred him to the Khanda district, where he'll have it all to do over again. He should be marching now."

"He's not a coolie," said William, furiously. "He ought to be doing his regulation work."

"He's the best man in his service, and that's saying a good deal; but if you *must* use razors to cut grindstones, why, I prefer the best cutlery."

"Isn't it almost time we saw him again?" said Mrs. Jim. "I'm sure the poor boy hasn't had a respectable meal for a month. He probably sits on a cart and eats sardines with his fingers."

"All in good time, dear. Duty before decency — wasn't it Mr. Chucks said that?"

"No; it was Midshipman Easy," William laughed. "I sometimes wonder how it will feel to dance or listen to a band again, or sit under a roof. I can't believe I ever wore a ball-frock in my life."

"One minute," said Mrs. Jim, who was thinking. "If he goes to Khanda, he passes within five miles of us. Of course he'll ride in."

"Oh, no, he won't," said William.

"How do you know, dear?"

"It will take him off his work. He won't have time."

"He'll make it," said Mrs. Jim, with a twinkle.

"It depends on his own judgment. There's absolutely no reason why he shouldn't, if he thinks fit," said Jim.

"He won't see fit," William replied, without sorrow or emotion. "It wouldn't be him if he did."

"One certainly gets to know people rather well in times like these," said Jim, drily; but William's face was serene as ever, and even as she prophesied, Scott did not appear.

The Rains fell at last, late, but heavily; and the dry, gashed earth was red mud, and servants killed snakes in the camp, where every one was weather-bound for a fortnight — all except Hawkins, who took horse and plashed about in the wet, rejoicing

Now the Government decreed that seed-grain should be distributed to the people, as well as advances of money for the purchase of new oxen; and the white men were doubly worked for this new duty, while William skipped from brick to brick laid down on the trampled mud, and dosed her charges with warming medicines that made them rub their little round stomachs; and the milch goats throve on the rank grass. There was never a word from Scott in the Khanda district, away to the south-east, except the regular telegraphic report to Hawkins. The rude country roads had disappeared; his drivers were half mutinous; one of Martyn's loaned policemen had died of cholera; and Scott was taking thirty grains of quinine a day to fight the fever that comes with the rain: but those were things Scott did not consider necessary to report. He was, as usual, working from a base of supplies on a railway line, to cover a circle of fifteen miles radius, and since full loads were impossible, he took quarter-loads, and toiled four times as hard by consequence; for he did not choose to risk an epidemic which might have grown uncontrollable by assembling villagers in thousands at the relief-sheds. It was cheaper to take Government bullocks, work them to death, and leave them to the crows in the wayside sloughs.

That was the time when eight years of clean living and hard condition told, though a man's head were

ringing like a bell from the cinchona, and the earth swayed under his feet when he stood and under his bed when he slept. If Hawkins had seen fit to make him a bullock-driver, that, he thought, was entirely Hawkins's own affair. There were men in the North who would know what he had done; men of thirty years' service in his own department who would say that it was "not half bad"; and above, immeasurably above, all men of all grades, there was William in the thick of the fight, who would approve because she understood. He had so trained his mind that it would hold fast to the mechanical routine of the day, though his own voice sounded strange in his own ears, and his hands, when he wrote, grew large as pillows or small as peas at the end of his wrists. That steadfastness bore his body to the telegraph-office at the railway-station, and dictated a telegram to Hawkins saying that the Khanda district was, in his judgment, now safe, and he "waited further orders."

The Madrassee telegraph-clerk did not approve of a large, gaunt man falling over him in a dead faint, not so much because of the weight as because of the names and blows that Faiz Ullah dealt him when he found the body rolled under a bench. Then Faiz Ullah took blankets, quilts and coverlets where he found them, and lay down under them at his master's side, and bound his

arms with a tent-rope, and filled him with a horrible stew of herbs, and set the policeman to fight him when he wished to escape from the intolerable heat of his coverings, and shut the door of the telegraph-office to keep out the curious for two nights and one day; and when a light engine came down the line, and Hawkins kicked in the door, Scott hailed him weakly but in a natural voice, and Faiz Ullah stood back and took all the credit.

"For two nights, Heaven-born, he was *pagal*," said Faiz Ullah. "Look at my nose, and consider the eye of the policeman. He beat us with his bound hands; but we sat upon him, Heaven-born, and though his words were *tez*, we sweated him. Heaven-born, never has been such a sweat! He is weaker now than a child; but the fever has gone out of him, by the grace of God. There remains only my nose and the eye of the constabeel. Sahib, shall I ask for my dismissal because my Sahib has beaten me?" And Faiz Ullah laid his long thin hand carefully on Scott's chest to be sure that the fever was all gone, ere he went out to open tinned soups and discourage such as laughed at his swelled nose.

"The district's all right," Scott whispered. "It doesn't make any difference. You got my wire? I shall be fit in a week. 'Can't understand how it happened. I shall be fit in a few days."

"You're coming into camp with us," said Hawkins.

"But look here — but —"

"It's all over except the shouting. We sha'n't need you Punjabis any more. On my honour, we sha'n't. Martyn goes back in a few weeks; Arbuthnot's returned already; Ellis and Clay are putting the last touches to a new feeder-line the Government's built as relief-work. Morten's dead — he was a Bengal man, though; you wouldn't know him. 'Pon my word, you and Will — Miss Martyn — seem to have come through it as well as anybody."

"Oh, how is she, by-the-way?" The voice went up and down as he spoke.

"Going strong when I left her. The Roman Catholic Missions are adopting the unclaimed babies to turn them into little priests; the Basil Mission is taking some, and the mothers are taking the rest. You should hear the little beggars howl when they're sent away from William. She's pulled down a bit, but so are we all. Now, when do you suppose you'll be able to move?"

"I can't come into camp in this state. I won't," he replied pettishly.

"Well, you *are* rather a sight, but from what I gathered there it seemed to me they'd be glad to see you under any conditions. I'll look over your work here, if you like, for a couple of days, and

you can pull yourself together while Faiz Ullah feeds you up."

Scott could walk dizzily by the time Hawkins's inspection was ended, and he flushed all over when Jim said of his work that it was "not half bad," and volunteered, further, that he had considered Scott his right-hand man through the famine, and would feel it his duty to say as much officially.

So they came back by rail to the old camp; but there were no crowds near it; the long fires in the trenches were dead and black, and the famine-sheds were almost empty.

"You see!" said Jim. "There isn't much more to do. 'Better ride up and see the wife. They've pitched a tent for you. Dinner's at seven. I've some work here."

Riding at a foot-pace, Faiz Ullah by his stirrup, Scott came to William in the brown-calico riding-habit, sitting at the dining-tent door, her hands in her lap, white as ashes, thin and worn, with no lustre in her hair. There did not seem to be any Mrs. Jim on the horizon, and all that William could say was: "My word, how pulled down you look!"

"I've had a touch of fever. You don't look very well yourself."

"Oh, I'm fit enough. We've stamped it out. I suppose you know?"

Scott nodded. "We shall all be returned in a few weeks. Hawkins told me."

"Before Christmas, Mrs. Jim says. Sha'n't you be glad to go back? I can smell the wood-smoke already"; William sniffed. "We shall be in time for all the Christmas doings. I don't suppose even the Punjab Government would be base enough to transfer Jack till the new year?"

"It seems hundreds of years ago — the Punjab and all that — doesn't it? Are you glad you came?"

"Now it's all over, yes. It has been ghastly here, though. You know we had to sit still and do nothing, and Sir Jim was away so much."

"Do nothing! How did you get on with the milking?"

"I managed it somehow — after you taught me. 'Remember?"

Then the talk stopped with an almost audible jar. Still no Mrs. Jim.

"That reminds me, I owe you fifty rupees for the condensed-milk. I thought perhaps you'd be coming here when you were transferred to the Khanda district, and I could pay you then; but you didn't."

"I passed within five miles of the camp, but it was in the middle of a march, you see, and the carts were breaking down every few minutes, and I couldn't get 'em over the ground till ten o'clock that night. I wanted to come awfully. You knew I did, didn't you?"

"I — believe — I — did," said William, facing him with level eyes. She was no longer white.

"Did you understand?"

"Why you didn't ride in? Of course I did."

"Why?"

"Because you couldn't, of course. I knew that."

"Did you care?"

"If you had come in — but I knew you wouldn't — but if you *had*, I should have cared a great deal. You know I should."

"Thank God I didn't! Oh, but I wanted to! I couldn't trust myself to ride in front of the carts, because I kept edging 'em over here, don't you know?"

"I knew you wouldn't," said William, contentedly. "Here's your fifty."

Scott bent forward and kissed the hand that held the greasy notes. Its fellow patted him awkwardly but very tenderly on the head.

"And *you* knew, too, didn't you?" said William, in a new voice.

"No, on my honour, I didn't. I hadn't the — the cheek to expect anything of the kind, except . . . I say, were you out riding anywhere the day I passed by to Khanda?"

William nodded, and smiled after the manner of an angel surprised in a good deed.

"Then it was just a speck I saw of your habit in the —"

"Palm-grove on the Southern cart-road. I saw your helmet when you came up from the nullah by the temple — just enough to be sure that you were all right. D' you care?"

This time Scott did not kiss her hand, for they were in the dusk of the dining-tent, and, because William's knees were trembling under her, she had to sit down in the nearest chair, where she wept long and happily, her head on her arms; and when Scott imagined that it would be well to comfort her, she needing nothing of the kind, she ran to her own tent; and Scott went out into the world, and smiled upon it largely and idiotically. But when Faiz Ullah brought him a drink he found it necessary to support one hand with the other, or the good whisky and soda would have been spilled abroad. There are fevers and fevers.

But it was worse — much worse — the strained eye-shirking talk at dinner till the servants had withdrawn, and worst of all when Mrs. Jim, who had been on the edge of weeping from the soup down, kissed Scott and William, and they drank one whole bottle of champagne, hot, because there was no ice, and Scott and William sat outside the tent in the starlight till Mrs. Jim drove them in for fear of more fever.

Apropos of these things and some others William said: "Being engaged is abominable, be-

cause, you see, one has no official position. We must be thankful we've lots of things to do."

"Things to do!" said Jim, when that was reported to him. "They're neither of them any good any more. I can't get five hours' work a day out of Scott. He's in the clouds half the time."

"Oh, but they're so beautiful to watch, Jimmy. It will break my heart when they go. Can't you do anything for him?"

"I've given the Government the impression — at least, I hope I have — that he personally conducted the entire famine. But all he wants is to get on to the Luni Canal Works, and William's just as bad. Have you ever heard 'em talking of barrage and aprons and waste-water? It's their style of spooning, I suppose."

Mrs. Jim smiled tenderly. "Ah, that's in the intervals — bless 'em."

And so Love ran about the camp unrebuked in broad daylight, while men picked up the pieces and put them neatly away of the Famine in the Eight Districts.

* * * * * * * * * * *

Morning brought the penetrating chill of the Northern December, the layers of wood-smoke, the dusty grey-blue of the tamarisks, the domes of ruined tombs, and all the smell of the white Northern plains, as the mail-train ran on to the

mile-long Sutlej Bridge. William, wrapped i
a *poshteen* — a silk-embroidered sheepskin jacke
trimmed with rough astrakhan — looked out wit
moist eyes and nostrils that dilated joyously. Th
South of pagodas and palm-trees, the overpopu
lated Hindu South, was done with. Here wa
the land she knew and loved, and before her la
the good life she understood, among folk of he
own caste and mind.

They were picking them up at almost ever
station now — men and women coming in for th
Christmas Week, with racquets, with bundles o
polo-sticks, with dear and bruised cricket-bats
with fox-terriers and saddles. The greater par
of them wore jackets like William's, for th
Northern cold is as little to be trifled with as th
Northern heat. And William was among them
and of them, her hands deep in her pockets, he
collar turned up over her ears, stamping her fee
on the platforms as she walked up and down t
get warm, visiting from carriage to carriage an
everywhere being congratulated. Scott was wit
the bachelors at the far end of the train, wher
they chaffed him mercilessly about feeding babie
and milking goats: but from time to time h
would stroll up to William's window, and mur
mur: "Good enough, isn't it?" and William
would answer with sighs of pure delight: "Goo
enough, indeed." The large open names of th

home towns were good to listen to. Umballa, Ludianah, Phillour, Jullundur, they rang like the coming marriage-bells in her ears, and William felt deeply and truly sorry for all strangers and outsiders—visitors, tourists, and those fresh-caught for the service of the country.

It was a glorious return, and when the bachelors gave the Christmas Ball, William was, unofficially, you might say, the chief and honoured guest among the Stewards, who could make things very pleasant for their friends. She and Scott danced nearly all the dances together, and sat out the rest in the big dark gallery overlooking the superb teak floor, where the uniforms blazed, and the spurs clinked, and the new frocks and four hundred dancers went round and round till the draped flags on the pillars flapped and bellied to the whirl of it.

About midnight half a dozen men who did not care for dancing came over from the Club to play "Waits," and—that was a surprise the Stewards had arranged—before any one knew what had happened, the band stopped, and hidden voices broke into "Good King Wenceslaus," and William in the gallery hummed and beat time with her foot:

"Mark my footsteps well, my page,
Tread thou in them boldly.
Thou shalt feel the winter's rage
Freeze thy blood less coldly!"

"Oh, I hope they are going to give us another
Isn't it pretty, coming out of the dark in that way
Look — look down. There's Mrs. Gregory wip
ing her eyes!"

"It's like Home, rather," said Scott. "I re
member — "

"Hsh! Listen!—dear." And it began again

"When shepherds watched their flocks by night — "

"A-h-h!" said William, drawing closer to Scott

"All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.
'Fear not,' said he (for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind);
'Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.'"

This time it was William that wiped her eyes.

THE SON OF HIS FATHER

"It is a queer name," Mrs. Strickland admitted, "and none of our family have ever borne it, but, you see, he *is* the first man to us."

So he was called Adam, and to that world about him he was the first of men — a man-child alone. Heaven sent him no Eve for a companion, but all earth, horse and foot, was at his feet. As soon as he was old enough to appear in public, he held a levee; and Strickland's sixty policemen, with their sixty clanking sabres, bowed to the dust before him. When his fingers closed a little on Imam Din's sword-hilt, they rose and roared — till Adam roared, too, and was withdrawn.

"Now, that was no cry of fear," said Imam Din, afterwards, speaking to his companions in the Police Lines. "He was angry — and so young! Brothers, he will make a very strong Police officer."

"Does the Memsahib give him the breast?" said a new Phillour recruit, the dye smell not yet out of his yellow cotton uniform.

"Ho!" said an up-country Naik, scornfully. "It

has not been known for *more* than ten days that my woman suckles him." He curled his moustaches as lordly as ever an Inspector could afford to do, for he knew that the husband of the foster-mother of the son of the District Superintendent of Police was a man sure of consideration.

"I am glad," said Imam Din, loosening his belt. "Those who drink our blood become of our own blood, and I have seen, in these thirty years, that the sons of the Sahibs, once being born here, return when they are men. Yes, they return after they have been to Belait [Europe]."

"And what do they do in Belait?" asked the recruit, respectfully.

"Get instruction — which thou hast not," returned the Naik. "Also they drink of *belaitee-pance* [soda-water], enough to give them that devil's restlessness which endures for all their lives. Whence we of Hind have trouble."

"My father's uncle," said Imam Din, slowly, with importance, "was Ressaldar of the Longcoat Horse; and the Empress called him to Belait in the year that she had accomplished fifty years of rule. *He* said (and there were also other witnesses) that the Sahibs there drink common water, even as do we; and that the *belaitee-pance* does *not* run in all the rivers."

"He said also that there was a Shish Mahal — a glass palace — half a *koss* in length, and that the

rail-*gharri* ran under the roads, and that there are boats bigger than a village. He is a great talker." The Naik spoke scornfully. He had no well-born uncles.

"He is a man of good birth," said Imam Din, with the least possible emphasis on the first word, and the Naik was silent.

"Ho! ho!" Imam Din reached out to his pipe, chuckling until his fat sides shook again. "Strickland Sahib's foster-mother was the wife of an *Arain* in the Ferozepur district. I was a young man then, ploughing while the English fought. This child will also be suckled here, and he will have double wisdom, and when he is a Police officer it will be very bad for the thieves in this *illakha*."

"There will be no English in the land then. They are asking permission of clerks and low-caste men to continue their rule even now," said the Naik.

"All but foolish men — such as those clerks are — would know that this asking is but an excuse for making trouble, and thus holding the country more strictly. Now, in an investigation, is it not our custom to permit the villagers to talk loosely and give us abuse for a little time? *Then* do we not grow hot, and walk them to the *thana* two by two — as these clerks will be walked? Thus do I read the new talk."

"So do not I," said the Naik, who borrowed the native newspapers.

"Because thou art young, and wast born in time of peace. *I* saw the year that was to end the English rule. Men said it was ended, indeed, and that all could now take their neighbour's cattle. This I saw ploughing, and I was minded to fight too, being a young man. My father sent me to Gurgaon to buy cattle, and I saw the tents of Van Corlin Sahib[1] in the wheat, and I saw that he was going up and down collecting the revenue, neither abating nor increasing it, though Delhi was all afire, and the Sahibs lay dead about the fields. I have seen what I have seen. This *Raj* will not be talked down; and he who builds on the present madness of the *Sahib-log*, which, O Naik, covers great cunning, builds for himself a lock-up. My father's uncle has seen their country, and he says that he is afraid as never he feared before. So Strickland Sahib's boy will come back to this country, and *his* son after him. Naik, have they named him yet?"

"The butler spoke to my household, having heard the talk at table, and he says that they will call him Adam, and no jaw-splitting English name. Ud-daam. The *padre* will name him at their church in due time."

"Who can tell the ways of Sahibs? Now, Strickland Sahib knows more of the Faith than ever I had time to learn—prayers, charms, names,

[1] Van Cortland?

and stories of the Blessed Ones. Yet he is not a Musalman," said Imam Din, thoughtfully.

"For the reason that he knows as much of the gods of Hindustan, and so rides with a rein in each hand. Remember that he sat under the Baba Atall, a *fakir* among *fakirs*, for ten days: whereby a man came to be hanged for the murder of the dancing-girl on the night of the great earthquake," said the Naik.

"True — it is true — and yet . . . they are one day so wise, the Sahibs, and another so foolish. But he has named the child well: Adam. Huzrut Adam! Ho! ho! Father Adam we must call him."

"And all who minister to the child," said the Naik, quietly, but with meaning, "will come to great honour."

Adam throve, being prayed over before the gods of at least three creeds, in a garden almost as fair as Eden. There were gigantic clumps of bamboo that talked continually, and enormous plantains on whose soft paper skin he could scratch with his nails; green domes of mango-trees as huge as the dome of St. Paul's, full of parrots as big as cassowaries, and grey squirrels the size of foxes. At the end of the garden stood a hedge of flaming poinsettias higher than anything in the world, because, childlike, Adam's eye could not carry to the tops of the mango-trees.

Their green went out against the blue sky, but the red poinsettias he could just see. A nurse who talked continually about snakes and pulled him back from the mouth of a fascinating dry well, and a mother who believed that the sun hurt little heads, were the only drawbacks to this loveliness. But, as his legs grew under him, he found that by scaling an enormous rampart — three feet of broken-down mud wall at the end of the garden — he could come into a ready-made kingdom where every one was his slave. Imam Din showed him the way one evening, and the police troopers cooking their supper received him with rapture, and gave him pieces of very indigestible but altogether delightful spiced bread.

Here he sat or sprawled in the horse-feed where the police horses were picketed in a double line, and he named them, men and beasts together, according to his ideas and experiences, as his First Father had done before him. In those days everything had a name, from the mud mangers to the heel-ropes; for things were people to Adam, exactly as people are things to folk in their second childhood. Through all the conferences — one hand twisted into Imam Din's beard, and the other on his polished belt-buckle — there were two other people who came and went across the talk — Death and Sickness — persons stronger than Imam Din, and stronger than the heel-roped

stallions. There was Mata, the small-pox, a woman in some way connected with pigs; and Heza, the cholera, a black man, according to Adam; and Booka, starvation; and Kismet, who quietly settled all questions, from the choking of a pet mungoose in the kitchen drain, to the absence of a young policeman who once missed a parade and never came back. It was all very wonderful to Adam, but not worth much thinking over; for a child's mind is bounded by his eyes exactly as a horse's view of the road is limited by blinkers. Between all these objectionable shadowy vagrants stood a ring of kind faces and strong arms, and Mata and Heza would never touch Adam, the first of men. Kismet might do so, because — and this was a mystery no staring into the looking-glass would solve — Kismet, who was a man, was also written, like police orders for the day, in or on Adam's head. Imam Din could not explain how this might be, and it was from that grey fat Muhammadan that Adam learned through every inflection the *Khuda janta* (God knows) that settled everything in his mind.

Beyond the fact that "Khuda" was a very good man and kept lions, Adam's theology did not run far. Mrs. Strickland tried to teach him a few facts, but he revolted at the story of Genesis as untrue. A turtle, he said, upheld the world, and one-half the adventures of Huzrut Nu (Father

Noah) had never been told. If Mamma wanted to hear them, she must ask Imam Din. Adam had heard of a saint who had made wooden cakes and pressed them to his stomach when he felt hungry, and the Feeding of the Multitude did not impress him. So it came about that a reading of miracle stories generally ended in a monologue by Adam on other and much more astonishing miracles.

"It's awful," said Mrs. Strickland, half crying; "to think of his growing up like a little heathen." Mrs. Strickland (Miss Youghal that was, if you remember her) had been born and brought up in England, and did not quite understand things.

"Let him alone," said Strickland; "he'll grow out of it all, or it will only come back to him in dreams."

"Are you sure?" said his wife, to whom Strickland's least word was pure truth.

"Quite. I was sent home when I was seven, and they flicked it out of me with a wet towel at Harrow. Public schools don't encourage anything that isn't quite English."

Mrs. Strickland shuddered, for she had been trying not to think of the separation that follows motherhood in India, and makes life there, for all that is written to the contrary, not quite the most desirable thing in the world. Adam trotted out to hear about more miracles, and his nurse must have worried him beyond bounds, for she

came back weeping, saying that Adam Baba was in danger of being eaten alive by wild horses.

As a matter of fact, he had shaken off Juma by bolting between a couple of picketed horses and lying down under their bellies. That they were personal friends of his, Juma did not understand, nor Strickland either. Adam was settled at ease when his father arrived, breathless and white, and the stallions put back their ears and squealed.

"If you come here," said Adam, "they will hit you kicks. Tell Juma I have eaten my rice and wish to be alone."

"Come out at once," said Strickland, for the horses were beginning to paw violently.

"Why should I obey Juma's order? She is afraid of horses."

"It is not Juma's order. It is *mine*. Obey!"

"Ho!" said Adam, "Juma did not tell me that." And he crawled out on all fours among the shod feet. Mrs. Strickland was crying bitterly with fear and excitement, and as a sacrifice to the home gods Adam had to be whipped. He said with perfect justice: "There was no order that I should not sit with the horses, and they are *my* horses. Why is there this *tamasha?*"

Strickland's face showed him that the whipping was coming, and the child turned white. Mother-like, Mrs. Strickland left the room, but Juma, the foster-mother, stayed to see.

"Am I to be whipped here?" he gasped.

"Of course."

"Before that woman? Father, I am a man — I am not afraid. It is my *izzat* — my honour."

Strickland only laughed (to this day I cannc imagine what possessed him), and gave Adam th little tap-tap with a riding-cane that was whippin sufficient for his years.

When it was all over, Adam said quietly: " am little, and you are big. If I stayed among m horse folk I should not have been whipped. *Yo* are afraid to go there."

The merest chance led me to Strickland's hous that afternoon. When I was half-way down th drive Adam passed me, without recognition, at fast run. I caught one glimpse of his face unde his big hat, and it was the face of his father as had once seen that in the grey of morning when i bent above a leper. I caught the child by th shoulder.

"Let me go!" he screamed, and he and I wer the best of friends, as a rule. "Let me go!"

"Where to, Father Adam?" He was quiver ing like a new-haltered colt.

"To the well. I have been beaten. I hav been beaten before women! Let me go!" H tried to bite my hand.

"That is a small matter," I said. "Men ar born to beatings."

"Thou hast never been beaten," he said savagely.

"Indeed I have. Times past counting."

"Before women?"

"My mother and the ayah saw. *By* women too, for that matter. What of it?"

"What didst thou do?" He stared beyond my shoulder up the long drive.

"It is long ago, and I have forgotten. I was older than thou art; but even then I forgot, and now the thing is but a jest to be talked of."

Adam drew one big breath and broke down utterly in my arms. Then he raised his head, and his eyes were Strickland's eyes when Strickland gave orders.

"Ho! Imam Din."

The fat orderly seemed to spring out of the earth at our feet, crashing through the bushes, and standing to attention.

"Hast thou ever been beaten?" said Adam.

"Assuredly. By my father when I was thirty years old. He beat me with a plough-beam before all the women of the village."

"Wherefore?"

"Because I had returned to the village on leave from the Government service, and had said of the village elders that they had not seen the world. Therefore he beat me, to show that no seeing of the world changed father and son."

"And thou?"

"I stood up. He was my father."

"Good," said Adam, and turned on his hee without another word.

Imam Din looked after him. "An elephan breeds but once in a lifetime, but he breeds ele phants. Yet I am glad I am no father of tuskers," said he.

"What is it all?" I asked.

"His father beat him with a whip no bigge than a reed. But the child could not have done what he desired to do without leaping through me. And I am of some few pounds weight Look!"

Imam Din stepped back through the bushes and the pressed grass showed that he had been lying curled round the mouth of the dry well.

"When there was talk of beating I knew tha one who sat among horses, such as ours, was no like to kiss his father's hand. So I lay down in this place." We both stood still looking at the well-curb.

Adam came back along the garden path to us "I have spoken to my father," he said simply "Imam Din, tell thy Naik that his woman is dis missed my service."

"Huzoor!" said Imam Din, stooping low.

"For no fault of hers."

"Protector of the Poor!"

"And to-day."

"Khodawund!"

"It is an order! Go!"

Again the salute, and Imam Din departed, with that same set of the back which he wore when he had taken an order from Strickland. I thought that it would be well to go too, but Strickland beckoned me from the verandah. When I came up he was perfectly white, and rocking to and fro in his chair, repeated "Good God!" half a dozen times.

"Do you know that he was going to chuck himself down the well — because I tapped him just now?" he said helplessly.

"I ought to," I replied. "He has just dismissed his nurse — on his own authority, I suppose?"

"He told me just now that he wouldn't have her for a nurse any more. I never supposed he meant it for an instant. I suppose she'll have to go."

It is written elsewhere that Strickland was feared through the length and breadth of the Punjab by murderers, horse-thieves, and cattle-lifters.

Adam returned, halting outside the verandah, very white about the lips.

"I have sent away Juma because she saw that — that which happened. Until she is gone I do not come in the house," he said.

"But to send away thy foster-mother?" said Strickland, with reproach.

"I do not send her away. It is *thy* blame," and the small forefinger was pointed to Strickland. "I will not obey her; I will not eat from her hand, and I will not sleep with her. Send her away."

Strickland stepped out and lifted the child into the verandah.

"This folly has lasted long enough," he said. "Come, now, and be wise."

"I am little, and you are big," said Adam, between set teeth. "You can beat me before this man or cut me to pieces. But I will not have Juma for my ayah any more. I will not eat till she goes. I swear it by — my father's head."

Strickland sent him indoors to his mother, and we could hear sounds of weeping, and Adam's voice saying nothing more than, "Send Juma away." Presently Juma came in and wept too, and Adam repeated, "It is no fault of thine, but go!"

And the end of it was that Juma went, with all her belongings, and Adam fought his own way alone into his little clothes until a new ayah came. His address of welcome to her was rather amazing. In a few words it ran: "If I do wrong send me to my father. If you strike me I will try to kill you. I do not wish my ayah to play with me. Go and eat rice."

From that day Adam forswore the society of ayahs and small native girls as much as a small boy can, confining himself to Imam Din and his friends of the police. The Naik, Juma's husband, had been presuming not a little on his position, and when Adam's favour was withdrawn from his wife he judged it best to apply for a transfer to another post. There were too many companions anxious to report his shortcomings to Strickland.

Towards his father Adam kept a guarded neutrality. There was not a touch of sulkiness in it, for the child's temper was as clear as a bell. But the difference and the politeness worried Strickland.

If the other men had loved Adam before the affair of the well, they worshipped him now.

"He knows what honour means," said Imam Din; "he has justified himself upon a point thereof. He has carried an order through his father's household as a child of the blood might do. Therefore he is not altogether a child any longer. Wah! He is a tiger's cub." The next time that Adam made his little unofficial inspection of the line, Imam Din, and by consequence all the others, stood upon their feet, with their hands to their sides, instead of calling out from where they lay, "Salaam, Babajee," and other disrespectful things.

But Strickland took long counsel with his wife, and she with the cheque-book and their lean bank-account, and they decided that Adam must go

"home" to his aunts. But England is not home to a child that has been born in India, and it never becomes home-like unless he spends all his youth there. The bank-book showed that if they economised through the summer by going to a cheap hill-station instead of to Simla, where Mrs. Strickland's parents lived, and where Strickland might be noticed by the powers, they could send Adam home in the next spring. It would be hard pinching, but it could be done. In India all the money that people in other lands save against a rainy day runs off in loss by exchange, which to-day cuts a man's income down almost exactly to one-half. There is nothing to show for money when all is put by, and that is what makes married life there so hard. Strickland used to say, sometimes, that he envied the convicts in the jail. They had no position to keep up, and the ball and chain that the worst of them wore was only a few pounds weight of iron.

Dalhousie was chosen as being the cheapest of the hill-stations; Dalhousie and a little five-roomed cottage full of mildew, tucked away among the rhododendrons.

Adam had been to Simla three or four times, and knew by name the most of the Tonga drivers from Kalka to Tara Deva; but this new plan disquieted him. He came to me for information, his hands deep in his knickerbocker pockets, walking, step for step, as his father walked.

"There will be none of my *bhai-bund* [brotherhood] up there," said he, disconsolately, "and they say that I must lie still in a doolie for a day and a night, being carried like a sheep. I wish to take some of my mounted men to Dalhousie."

I told him that there was a small boy called Victor, at Dalhousie, who had a calf for a pet, and was allowed to play with it on the public roads. After that Adam could not sufficiently hurry the packing.

"First," said he, "I shall ask that man Victor to let me play with the cow's child. If he is *mugra* [ill-conditioned] I shall tell my policemen to take it away."

"But that is unjust," said Strickland, "and there is no order that the police should do injustice."

"When the Government pay is not sufficient, and low-caste men are promoted, what *can* an honest man do?" he replied, in the very touch and accent of Imam Din, and Strickland's eyebrows went up.

"You talk too much to the police, my son," he said.

"Always, about everything," said Adam, promptly. "They say that when I am an officer I shall know as much as my father."

"God forbid, little one!"

"They say, too, that you are as clever as Shaitan to know things."

"They say that, do they?" said Strickland, looking pleased. His pay was small, but he had his reputation, and that was dear to him.

"They say also — not to me, but to one another when they eat rice behind the wall — that in your own heart you esteem yourself as wise as Suleiman, who was cheated by Shaitan."

This time Strickland did not look so pleased. Adam, in all innocence, launched into a long story about Suleiman-bin-Daoud, who once, out of vanity, pitted his wits against Shaitan, and because God was not on his side Shaitan sent "a little devil of low caste," as Adam put it, who cheated him utterly, and put him to shame before "all the other Rajas."

"By Jove!" said Strickland, when the tale was done, and went away, while Adam took me to task for laughing at Imam Din's story. I did not wonder that he was called Huzrut Adam, for he looked old as all time in his grave childhood, sitting cross-legged, his battered little helmet far at the back of his head, his forefinger wagging up and down, native fashion, and the wisdom of serpents on his unconscious lips.

That May he went up to Dalhousie with his mother, and in those days the journey ended in fifty or sixty miles of uphill travel in a doolie or palanquin, along a road winding through the Himalayas. Adam sat in the doolie with his mother

and Strickland rode and tied with me, a spare doolie following. The march began after we got out of the train at Pathankot, in a hot night among the rice- and poppy-fields.

It was all new to Adam, and he had opinions to advance — notably about a fish that jumped on a wayside pond.

"Now I know," he shouted, "how Khuda puts them there. First He makes them and then He drops them down. That was a new one." Then, lifting his head to the stars, he cried, "O God, do it again, but slowly, that I, Adam, may see."

But nothing happened, and the doolie-bearers lit the noisome, dripping rag torches, and Adam's eyes shone big in the dancing light, and we smelt the dry dust of the plains that we were leaving after eleven months' hard work.

At stated times the men ceased their drowsy, grunting tune, and sat down for a smoke. Between the guttering of their water-pipes we could hear the cries of the beasts of the night, and the wind stirring in the folds of the mountain ahead. At the changing stations the voice of Adam, the first of men, would be lifted to rouse the sleepers in the huts till the fresh relays of bearers shambled from their cots, and the relief-pony with them.

Then we would re-form and go on, and by the time the moon rose Adam was asleep, and there

was no sound in the night except the grunting of the men, the husky murmur of some river a thousand feet down in the valley, and the squeaking of Strickland's saddle. So we went up from the date-palm to deodar, till the dawn wind came round a corner all fresh from the snows, and we snuffed it. I heard Strickland say: "Wife, my overcoat, please," and Adam, fretfully: "Where is Dalhousie, and the cow's child?" and then I slept till Strickland turned me out of the warm doolie at seven o'clock, and I stepped into the splendour of a cool hill day, the plains sweltering twenty miles back and three thousand feet below.

Adam waked too, and needs must ride in front of me to ask a million questions, and shout at the monkeys, and clap his hands when the painted pheasants bolted across our road, and hail every wood-cutter and drover and pilgrim within sight till we halted for breakfast at a staging-house. After breakfast, being a child, he went out to play with a train of bullock-drivers haltered by the roadside, and we had to chase him out of a native liquor-shop where he was bargaining with a naked seven-year-old for a *mynah* in a bamboo cage.

Said he, wriggling on my pommel, as we went on again: "There were four men *bebosh* [insensible] at the back of that house. Wherefore do men grow *bebosh* from drinking?"

"It is the nature of the water," I said, and call

ing back: "Strick, what's that grog-shop doing so close to the road? It's a temptation to any one's servants."

"Dun'no," said a sleepy voice in the doolie. "This is Kennedy's district. 'Twasn't here in my time."

"Truly the water smells bad," Adam went on. "I smelt it, but I did not get the *mynah* even for six annas. The woman of the house gave me a love-gift, that I found, playing near the verandah."

"And what was the gift, Father Adam?"

"A nose-ring for my ayah. Ohe! ohe! Look at that camel with a bag on his nose." A string of loaded camels came cruising round the corner, as a fleet rounds a cape.

"Ho, Malik! why does not a camel salaam like an elephant? His neck is long enough," Adam cried.

"The Angel Jibrail made him a fool from the beginning," said the driver, as he swayed on the top of the led beast, and laughter ran all along the line of red-bearded men.

"That is true," said Adam, and they laughed again.

At last, in the late afternoon, we came to Dalhousie, loveliest of the hill-stations, and separated. Adam hardly could be restrained from setting out at once to find Victor and the "cow's child." I found them both, something to my trouble, next morning. The two young sinners had a calf on

a taut line just at a sharp turn in the Mall, and were pretending that he was a Raja's elephant who had gone mad. But it was my horse that nearly went mad, and they shouted with delight. Then we began to talk, and Adam, by way of crushing Victor's repeated reminders that he and not "that other" was the owner of the calf, said "It is true I have no cow's child, but a great da- coity has been done on my father."

"We came up together yesterday. There could have been nothing," I said.

"It was my mother's horse. She has been *da- coited* with beating and blows, and now it is so thin." He held his hands an inch apart. "My father is at the *tar*-house sending *tars*. Imam Din will cut off *all* their heads. I desire your saddle- cloth for a howdah to my elephant. Give it me.'

This was exciting, but not lucid. I went to the telegraph-office and found Strickland in a bad temper among many telegraph-forms. A dishev- elled, one-eyed groom stood in a corner, whimper- ing at intervals. He was a man whom Adam invariably addressed as "*Be-shakl, be-ukl, be-ank*" — ugly, stupid, eyeless. It seemed, according to Strickland, that he had sent his wife's horse up to Dalhousie by road, a fortnight's march. This is the custom in Upper India. Among the foot-hills near Dhunnera or Dhar, horse and man had been violently set upon in the night by four men, who

had beaten the groom (his leg was bandaged from knee to ankle in proof), had incidentally beaten the horse, and had robbed the groom of the bucket, and all his money — eleven rupees, nine annas, three pie. Last, they had left him for dead by the wayside, where wood-cutters had found and nursed him. Then the one-eyed howled with anguish, thinking over his bruises. "They asked me if I was Strickland Sahib's servant, and I, thinking the protection of the name would be sufficient, spoke the truth. Then they beat me grievously."

"Hm!" said Strickland. "I thought they wouldn't dacoit as a business on the Dalhousie road. This is meant for me personally — sheer *badmashi* [impudence]. All right."

In justice to a very hard-working class, it must be said that the thieves of Upper India have the keenest sense of humour. The last compliment that they can pay a Police officer is to rob him, and if, as once they did, they can loot a Deputy Inspector-General of Police, on the eve of his retirement, of everything except the clothes on his back, their joy is complete. They cause letters of derision and telegrams of condolence to be sent to the victim; for of all men, thieves are most compelled to keep up with modern progress.

Strickland was a man of few words where his business was concerned. I had never seen a Police officer robbed before, and I expected some excite-

ment; but Strickland held his tongue. He too
the groom's deposition and retired into himsel
for a time, evolving thieves. Then he sent Ke
nedy, of the Pathankot charge, an official lett
and an unofficial note. Kennedy's reply wa
purely unofficial, and it ran thus: "This seems
compliment solely intended for you. My wond
is, you didn't get it before. The men are prob
ably back in your district by this time. Th
Dhunnera and foot-hill people are highly respe
table cultivators, and seeing my Assistant is a
unlicked pup, and I can't trust my Inspector ou
of my sight, I am not going to turn their harve
upside down with a police investigation. I am ru
off my feet with vaccination police work. You'
better look at home. The Shubkudder Gang we
through here a fortnight back. They laid up
the Amritsar Serai, and then worked down. N
cases against them in my charge, but remembe
you lagged their malik for receiving in Pru
Dyal's burglary. They owe you one."

"Exactly what I thought," said Strickland. "
had a notion it was the Shubkudder Gang fro
the first. We must make it pleasant for them
Peshawur, and in my district too. They are ju
the kind that would lie up under Imam Din
shadow."

From this point onward the wires began to b
worked heavily. Strickland had a very fair knov

ledge of the Shubkudder Gang, gathered at first hand.

They were the same syndicate that had once stolen a Deputy Commissioner's cow, put horse-shoes on her, and taken her forty miles into the jungle before they lost interest in the joke. They added insult to insult by writing that the Deputy Commissioner's cows and horses were so much alike that it took them two days to find out the difference, and they would not lift the like of such cattle any more.

The District Superintendent at Peshawur replied to Strickland that he was expecting the gang, and Strickland's Assistant in his own district, being young and full of zeal, sent up the most amazing clues.

"Now that's just what I want that young fool not to do," said Strickland. "He hasn't passed the lower standard yet, and he's an English boy born and bred, and his father before him. He has about as much tact as a bull, and he won't work quietly under my Inspector. I wish the Government would keep our service for country-born men. Those first five or six years give a man a pull that lasts him his life. Adam, if you were only old enough to be my 'Stunt'!" He looked down at the little fellow on the verandah. Adam was deeply interested in the dacoity, and, unlike a child, did not lose interest after the first

week. On the contrary, he would ask his fathe every evening what had been done, and Stricklan had drawn him a picture on the white wall of th verandah showing the different towns in whic policemen were on the lookout for the thieve They were Amritsar, Jullundur, Phillour, Gu gaon, in case the gang were moving south; Rawa Pindi and Peshawur, with Multan. Adam looke up at the picture as he answered:

"There has been great *dikh* [trouble] in thi case."

"Very great trouble. I wish thou wert a youn man and my assistant to help me."

"Dost thou need help, my father?" Adan asked curiously, with his head on one side.

"Very much."

"Leave it all alone. It is bad. Let loos everything."

"That must not be. Those beginning a busi ness continue to the end."

"Thou wilt continue to the end? Dost tho not *know* who did the dacoity?"

Strickland shook his head. Adam turned t me with the same question, and I answered it i the same way.

"What foolish people!" he said, and turne his back on us. He showed plainly in all ou dealings afterwards how we had fallen in hi opinion. Strickland told me that he would s

at the door of his work-room and stare at him for half an hour at a time as he went through his papers. Strickland seemed to work harder over the case than if he had been in office on the plains.

"And sometimes I look up and I fancy the little chap's laughing at me. It's an awful thing to have a son. You see, he's your own and his own, and between the two you don't know quite how to handle him," said Strickland. "I wonder what in the world he thinks about?"

I asked Adam this on my own account. He put his head on one side for a moment and replied: "In these days I think about great things; I do not play with Victor and the cow's child any more. He is only a baba."

At the end of the third week of Strickland's leave the result of Strickland's labours — labours that had made Mrs. Strickland more indignant against dacoits than any one else — came to hand. The police at Peshawur reported that half the Shubkudder Gang were held at Peshawur to account for the possession of some blankets and a horse-bucket. Strickland's Assistant had also four men under suspicion in his charge; and Imam Din must have stirred up Strickland's Inspector to investigations on his own account, for a string of incoherent telegrams came in from the Club Secretary, in which he entreated, exhorted, and commanded Strickland to take his "mangy havil-

dars" off the club premises. "Your men, in servants' quarters here, examining cook. Marker indignant. Steward threatens resignation. Members furious. *Saises* stopped on roads. Shut up, or my resignation goes to committee."

"Now, I shouldn't in the least wonder," said Strickland, thoughtfully, to his wife, "if the club was not just *the* place where a man would lie up. Bill Watson isn't at all pleased, though. I think I shall have to cut my leave by a week and go down there. If there's anything to be told, the men will tell me. It will never do for the gang to think they can dacoit my belongings."

That was in the forenoon, and Strickland asked me to tiffin to leave me some instructions about his big dog, with authority to rebuke those who did not attend to her. Tietjens was growing too old and too fat to live in the plains in summer. When I came, Adam had climbed into his high chair at the table, and Mrs. Strickland seemed ready to weep at any moment over the general misery of things.

"I go down the hill to-morrow, little son," said Strickland.

"Wherefore?" said Adam, reaching out for a ripe mango and burying his head in it.

"Imam Din has caught the men who did the dacoity, and there are also others at Peshawur under suspicion. I must go to see."

"*Bus!*" said Adam, between the sucks at his mango, as Mrs. Strickland tucked the napkin round his neck. "It is enough. Imam Din speaks lies. Do not go."

"It is necessary. There has been great *dikhdari* [trouble-giving]."

Adam came out of the fruit for a minute and laughed. Then, returning, he spoke between slow and deliberate mouthfuls.

"The dacoits live in Beshakl's head. They will never be caught. All people know that. The cook knows, and the scullion, and Rahim Baksh here."

"Nay," said the butler behind his chair, hastily. "What should I know? Nothing at all does the servant of the Presence know."

"Accha," said Adam, and sucked on. "Only it *is* known."

"Speak, then," said Strickland. "What dost thou know? Remember the *sais* was beaten insensible."

"That was in the bad-water shop where I played when we came here. The boy who would not sell me the *mynah* for six annas told me that a one-eyed man had come there and drunk the bad waters and gone mad. He broke bedsteads. They hit him with a bamboo till he fell senseless, and, fearing he was dead, they nursed him on milk like a little baba. When I was playing first with

the cow's child I asked Beshakl if he were that man, and he said no. But I knew, because many wood-cutters asked him whether his head were whole now."

"But why," I interrupted, "did Beshakl tell lies?"

"Oh! he is a low-caste man, and desired consideration. Now he is a witness in a great law case, and men will go to the jailkhana on his account. It was to give trouble and obtain notice."

"Was it all lies?" said Strickland,

"Ask him," said Adam, cheerily, through the mango-juice.

Strickland passed through the door; there was a howl of despair in the servants' quarters up the hill, and he returned with the one-eyed groom.

"Now," said Strickland, "it is known. Declare!"

"Beshakl," said Adam, while the man gasped "Imam Din has caught four men, and there are some more at Peshawur. *Bus! Bus! Bus!* Tell about the mare and how she rolled."

"Thou didst get drunk by the wayside, and didst make a false case to cover it. Speak!"

Like many other men, Strickland, in possession of a few facts, was irresistible. The groom groaned.

"I — I did not get drunk — till — till — Protector of the Poor, the mare rolled."

"All horses roll at Dhunnera. The road is too narrow before that, and they smell where the other horses have rolled. This the bullock-drivers told me when they came there," said Adam.

"She rolled. The saddle was cut, and the curb-chain was lost."

"See!" said Adam, tugging a curb-chain from his pocket. "That woman in the shop gave it to me for a love-gift. Beshakl said it was not his when I showed it. But *I* knew."

"Then they in the grog-shop, knowing that I was the servant of the Presence, said that unless I drank and spent money they would tell."

"A lie. A lie," said Strickland. "Son of an owl, speak truth now at least."

"Then I was afraid because I had lost the curb-chain, so I cut the saddle across and about."

"She did *not* roll, then?" said Strickland, bewildered and very angry.

"It was the curb-chain that was lost. That was the beginning of all. I cut the saddle to look as though she had rolled, and went to drink in the shop. I drank, and there was a fray. The rest I have forgotten, till I was recovered."

"And the mare the while? What of the mare?"

The man looked at Strickland, and collapsed. "I will speak truth. She bore fagots for a wood-cutter for a week."

"Oh, poor *Diamond!*" said Mrs. Strickland.

"And Beshakl was paid four annas for her hire three days ago by the wood-cutter's brother, who is the left-hand man of the *jhampanis* here," said Adam, in a loud and joyful voice. "We all knew. We all knew. I and all the servants."

Strickland was silent. His wife stared helplessly at the child — the soul called out of the Nowhere that went its own way alone.

"Did no man help thee with the lies?" I asked of the groom.

"None, Protector of the Poor — not one."

"They grew, then?"

"As a tale grows in the telling. Alas! I am a very bad man," and he blinked his one eye dolefully.

"Now four men are held at my station on thy account, and God knows how many more at Peshawur, besides the questions at Multan, and my *izzat* is lost, and the mare has been pack-pony to a wood-cutter. Son of devils, what canst thou do to make amends?"

There was just a little break in Strickland's voice, and the man caught it. Bending low, he answered in the abject, fawning whine that confounds right and wrong more surely even than most modern creeds. "Protector of the Poor, is the police service shut to — an honest man?"

"Out!" cried Strickland, and swiftly as the

groom departed he must have heard our shout of laughter behind him.

"If you dismiss that man, Strick, I shall engage him. He's a genius," I said. "It will take you months to put this mess right, and Billy Watson won't give you a minute's peace."

"You aren't going to tell him?" said Strickland, appealingly.

"I couldn't keep this to myself if you were my own brother. Four men held in your district — four or forty at Peshawur — and what was that you said about Multan?"

"Oh, nothing. Only some camel men there have been — "

"On account of a curb-chain. Oh, my aunt!"

"And whose memsahib was thy aunt?" said Adam, with the mango stone in his fist. We began to laugh again.

"But here," said Strickland, pulling his face together, "is a very bad child who has caused his father to lose honour before all the policemen of the Punjab."

"Oh, they know," said Adam. "It was only for the sake of show that they caught the people. Assuredly they all knew it was *bunao* [make-up]."

"And since when hast thou known?" said the first policeman in India to his son.

"Four days after we came here — after the wood-cutter had asked Beshakl of the health of his

head. Beshakl all but slew a wood-cutter at that bad-water place."

"If thou hadst spoken then, time and money and trouble to me and to others had all been spared. Baba, thou hast done a wrong greater than thy knowledge, and thou hast put me to shame, and set me out upon false words, and broken my honour. Thou hast done *very* wrong. But perhaps thou didst not think?"

"Nay, but I *did* think. Father, *my* honour was lost when that happened that — that happened in Juma's presence. Now it is made whole again."

And, with the most enchanting smile in the world, Adam climbed on to his father's lap.

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